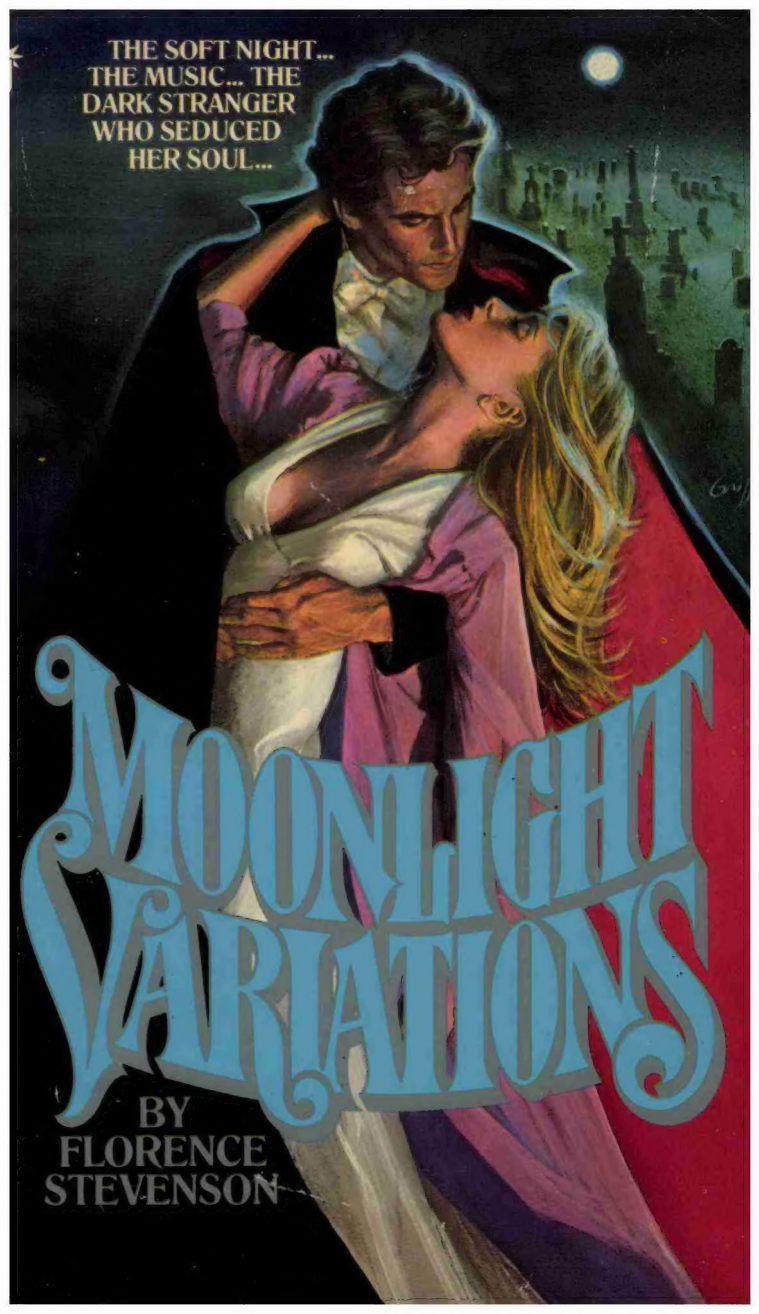


THE SOFT NIGHT...
THE MUSIC... THE
DARK STRANGER
WHO SEDUCED
HER SOUL...

A dramatic illustration of a man in a tuxedo embracing a woman in a pink dress against a night cityscape. The man is looking down at the woman, who is looking up at him. The background shows a city skyline at night with a full moon. The title 'MOONLIGHT VARIATIONS' is written in large, stylized, blue letters across the middle of the image.

MOONLIGHT VARIATIONS

BY
FLORENCE
STEVENSON



WHAT HAD SHE SAID TO DRIVE HIM AWAY?

"I want to know about Dario!" I sobbed.

She opened the diary and took out two small pictures. "One of these is your Aunt Barbary, whom you resemble. The other is a likeness of the man she loved, the man who destroyed her and who has come back to destroy you."

"I . . . I don't want to—to see it. You're crazy. What did you tell him to make him go away? I hate you!" I cried.

"Look at it!" She thrust the picture at me.

It was the tintype of a young man in Victorian dress, but when I saw his face, I felt the floor heave beneath me. It was Dario! "I . . . I don't understand," I whispered.

She put the book in my hand. "Read," she ordered. "Read it, Lora, as you value your life—and your immortal soul!"

Moonlight Variations

Also by Florence Stevenson
from Jove
THE GOLDEN GALATEA

MOONLIGHT VARIATIONS

FLORENCE
STEVENSON



A JOVE BOOK

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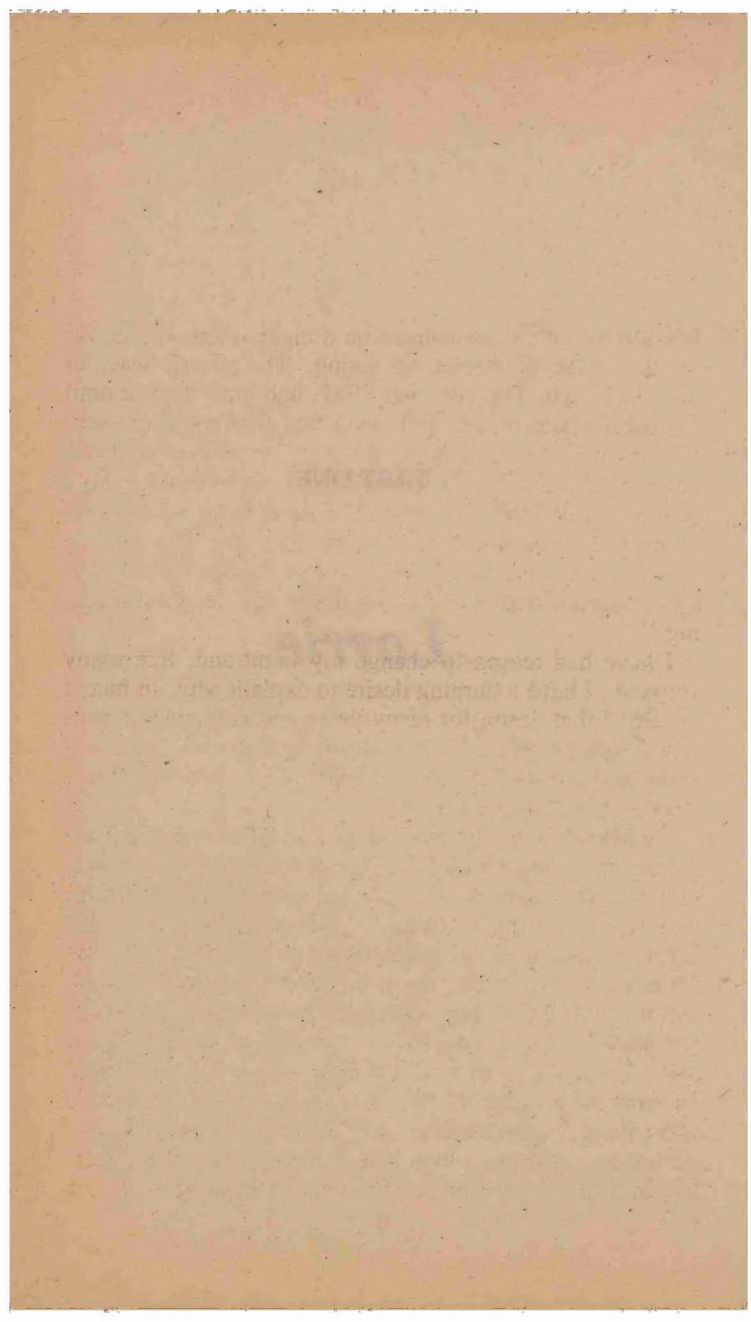
MOONLIGHT VARIATIONS



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PART ONE

Lorrie



MY ENTIRE LIFE was changed on a night when winter was on the verge of becoming spring. The month was, of course, March. The year was 1952, and until then or until the period immediately following that first startling event I, in common with many scientists, believed our existence on earth was the result of some great cosmic upheaval. I scoffed at all forms of religion. I maintained with a certainty born of an innate scepticism that Life was only an accidental arrangement of atoms. I was furious when anyone disagreed with me. I accused them of "wishful thinking."

I have had reason to change my mind and, like many converts, I have a burning desire to explain why. In fact, I have had that desire for many years and now since I have time as well, I am setting down experiences which to many may seem strange and unbelievable . . . but isn't that always the way with truth?

On March 20th, 1952, I was attending Elkston, a private college in Massachusetts. I am deliberately not giving proper names or locations because there are people I must protect, among them, myself. Let me add, however, that Elkston, in addition to being small, is noted for its music department, which, like that of Indiana University at Bloomington, has several very fine musicians on the faculty. In my day, it was renowned for two teachers: Rosalie Tynan and Alfredo Martinelli. She taught piano, he, the violin. To work with either of them was to be practically assured of a concert career because both had trained virtuosos, and neither accepted more than two or three pupils in a semester. In 1952, I was one of the two students Mrs. Tynan

deigned to take. It was a great honor, but, contrary to the belief of those other pianists she did not accept, I did not win it because Barbary Clinton, one of the handful of famous female virtuosi of the piano, was my great-grandmother's sister. In fact, when I auditioned for her, I did not even tell her. I had promised my father I would not mention the relationship until after the audition.

Even if he had not given me that injunction, I wouldn't have told her. I wanted to succeed on my own merit and I wanted to prove to him and to my Great-Aunt Maude, who was his advisor on these matters and my severest critic, that I could. If I did fail, I had vowed to leave the following day and never play another note of music as long as I lived. Of course, I could never have kept that vow because music was my life. I loved it, but my confidence in my prowess was very shaky, mainly because my family still basked in the borrowed light of my great-great aunt's luminous reputation. When I say "family," I will narrow that down to my father and to my Great-Aunt Maude, both of whom had heard her play, in her declining years to be sure, but still enough to acquire and wield a yardstick by which they measured all other pianistic talent, particularly mine.

They were very critical and terribly afraid that my teacher at home was praising my work because she had been mesmerized by the name of Barbary Clinton. They had reasons for feeling as they did because every time one or another of them came to the little recitals my teacher gave, I was sure to become so nervous that I made meaningless errors, which I never did when they were not present. Those recitals were the bane of my existence, for they gave me a complex about performing in public, which was one of the problems I would most certainly have to overcome if I were to pursue the career my great-aunt said I had no right to anticipate. My father was a shade less exacting, mainly because I believe he hoped against hope that I might have inherited some of Barbary Clinton's talent,

though he was always defensively quick to agree with Great-Aunt Maude that talent could not be inherited.

My mother thought my playing was good, but she always qualified her statement by adding that she had no real ear for music. Furthermore, she was of a conventional turn of mind and wanted me to get married and lead what she termed "a normal life, my dear, not like that of poor Barbary Clinton," who was so reclusive that she appeared in public only when performing and otherwise spent her days behind doors marked "Do Not Disturb."

Consequently, when I finally obtained permission to enroll at Elkston, acceptance by Mrs. Tynan was a test. If I managed to get her to instruct me, my father told me, he would no longer oppose my musical aspirations. Fortunately, at that particular period, Great-Aunt Maude was away—traveling in India.

Naturally, with so much at stake, I was terribly nervous when I came to audition for Mrs. Tynan in her little studio at Mozart Hall. The fact that a large portrait of Eric LeVaux, one of her first and, certainly her most famous pupil, was hanging in the waiting room did not make me feel any more confident. I had read about his background in the program of one of his concerts. He had worked with several famous teachers before coming to Mrs. Tynan. I, on the other hand, had never really studied with a first-rate instructor. Miss Pelitte was a graduate of the Boston Conservatory of Music, but she was definitely not a master musician. Furthermore, finally in agreement with my father and my aunt, I was sure she worshipped the reputation of Barbary Clinton and was humbly grateful to have the chance to say that she was instructing one of her relations. Yet, at the same time, I disagreed with my father, at least in regards to my own work. Under my lack of confidence, there was a strong vein of confidence that manifested itself when I started playing. Once I was really into a piece of music, I felt at one with the composer and, instinctively, I knew what he wanted to say. I could never explain this

merging of personalities but when it happened, it seemed to me that I was on another plane, out of myself to the extent that my fingers seemed to be guided by his brain. It occurred to me that if this transpersonal experience occurred in Mrs. Tynan's studio, she would accept me. She would have no choice. Unfortunately, just as my self-confidence rose, the door of the inner room opened and a young man slunk out. In the single glance I had of his face, I saw that he was flushed and his eyes downcast. Evidently, he had been rejected as I probably would be, too.

"Miss MacIvor," said an absolutely glacial voice.

Looking to my left, I found a tall, thin woman with deep blue eyes set in a long face with rather horsey features. It was surmounted by thin gray hair which she wore strained back in a tight knot at the base of her neck. She was dressed in gray and she had the bony, knotted hands one sees on some pianists.

Her expression was not conciliating as she repeated, "Miss MacIvor?"

I rose quickly, "Y-Yes, M-Madame."

"Not *Madame*," she said shortly. "*Mrs.* Tynan. I am neither a foreigner nor a prima donna."

"M-Mrs. T-Tynan," I stammered. "Excuse m-me."

"You're very nervous," she observed. "If you know your art, you shouldn't be nervous. I do hope you're not going to waste my time and your own. Why do you wish to study with me? No, I shall rephrase that question. Why do you wish to study piano? You're a pretty girl. Do you imagine that a concert career would be exciting and glamorous?"

I am sure I paled. It seemed to me that she would send me away even before she heard me. I said, "I can never remember a time when I didn't want to play the piano. If . . . if I can't have a career, I shall still play. I couldn't live without my music."

"Humph," she grunted. "That's not true. You couldn't live without food, water, or sleep, but you could live

without playing the piano—billions have. However, since I think you believe what you just told me, come along and let's hear you."

My heart was in my throat and I was swallowing air-bubbles to keep it company, as I stepped into the next room. A small dark chamber with a window half-covered by the shrubbery growing just outside it, it was almost as bare as a monk's cell. There was only a chair, a piano and a bench. Looking at it, I said, "Shall I?" and in my nervousness, I headed for the chair.

"No," she said sharply, "sit there." Raising one arm, she pointed at the bench.

The stiffness of her movement reminded me of a metronome. I bit back a hysterical giggle at the thought that she was also metronome-shaped, thin at the top and spreading out toward the base because of her full skirt. However, once I had sat down and placed my hands on the keyboard, all extraneous thoughts fled and without even announcing my selection, I started to play Beethoven's Sonata in F Minor (the "Appassionata") and, as I had prayed it might, the music claimed me.

I was in the middle of the third movement when she suddenly called out harshly, "Stop, that's enough, Miss MacIvor."

My fingers froze and the top of my head felt strange, as if I had suffered some manner of electric shock. I was terrified and disappointed. "Was . . . it so bad?"

"Bad?" she repeated brusquely, "you know that it was not bad. Generally, I stop an audition at the end of the first movement or even before. I let you go on for three. Who's your teacher?"

"Her . . . her name's Dora Pelitte." I said.

"I never heard of her," she frowned. "Why is that?"

"She's not well-known."

"She ought to be," Mrs. Tynan said curtly. "A woman who turns out such a pupil ought to be well-known."

It seemed to me that she was praising me as well as my

teacher, but I could not be entirely sure. Her manner was curt and her glance as frosty as ever. "I . . . do not understand," I said, suspended between hope and fear.

Mrs. Tynan stepped to the curve of the piano and looked down at me. She said in curiously constricted tones, "You're obviously well-taught. You have a good . . . a fine technique. Oh, I am not saying you don't need more work. You do, but you are well on your way to your goal. Your touch is amazingly powerful. In fact, I've only heard one other woman who possessed that power. It was said of her that her piano was her lover. I felt that myself, though I was only twelve when I heard her." Almost to herself, she added, "She was old then, it was her farewell concert," she gave me a wintery smile, "not her final farewell, for that came four years later, but she was approaching seventy. I am talking about Barbary Clinton." She pronounced the name with that mixture of awe and reverence that some people reserve for their God.

I felt a chill run through me. "B-Barbary Clinton . . . ?" I repeated.

She nodded, "Don't get the idea I'm comparing you to her. You are centuries away from her in skill, but the touch . . . the touch is very good."

"You'll accept me as . . . a pupil, then?" I faltered.

"I'll let you sign up for this one semester. After that . . . we'll see."

"Oh," I said tremulously, "thank you. I . . . I shall have to call my father immediately. He will be so pleased."

She gave me a long penetrating look. "You're afraid of your father," she stated.

"N-no, I . . . yes," I admitted weakly.

"Why?" she demanded.

"I . . . he . . . he's a perfectionist. He didn't think you'd take me."

She threw up her hands. "God preserve me from the fathers of musicians!" she exclaimed. "Is he a pianist, too?"

"No, he's a p-publisher. He . . . never even wanted to t-touch the piano, but I couldn't keep away from it. I—I expect I'd best tell you that my great-great aunt was Barbary Clinton."

She tensed, looking at me with considerable surprise. "Well," she said, "well, well, well. Musical ability does run in certain families—we need only look as far as Bach and Mozart for our corroboration, but I never heard of a touch being inherited. Yet . . . you have it. It's not as sure, not yet, but how old are you?"

"I'll be seventeen in two months," I said.

"You'll have it before you're twenty-seven," she said. She gave me one of her sharp looks. "Why are you surprised? Have you no confidence?" Before I could answer, she continued, "But you do, once you're at the piano. However, before and after you perform, you remind me of a whipped puppy. Is that part of the reason you came to me? Am I to instill confidence in you? I can't do that, but I expect I can cure you of some of that timidity. You need a performer's personality. I hope you can develop it, otherwise the critics will be leaping at your throat like hounds out for the kill. If there's anything they hate, it is false modesty and that's the impression you convey."

"I—I'm n—not . . . I don't mean to . . ." I began.

She flung up her hands again. "Enough. I know you don't mean it." Her face softened and she looked much more approachable as she said, "Quite truthfully, my dear, being the great-great niece of Barbary Clinton is a burden I shouldn't like to bear, not if I had any artistic aspirations of my own. Well, we'll see what we can do for you, Miss MacIvor. I'll send you a list of the hours I can see you."

By March of the year 1952, I had been studying with Mrs. Tynan for two years and the difference in my playing was considerable; even my father admitted that. My Great-Aunt Maude was still not in agreement with my studies, but with

Mrs. Tynan's infrequent words of praise buoying me up, I was gaining the confidence I needed to perform in public and I had already had one successful recital in the Teatro Camera, a tiny jewel box of a house located in the basement of Mo-Hall, which was what everybody called Mozart Hall. My real trial, however, would come with my April concert with the school orchestra in the huge auditorium of that same hall. There would be critics attending and music managers, but more formidable to me was the fact that my parents and my great-aunt would also be present.

On the night of March 20th, my concert was only two weeks away and I was holed up in a practice room at the back of Mo-Hall working on a difficult passage in the *adagio animato* section of Liszt's Concerto No. 2 in A Major, the piece I had selected for my program. Yet, though I had only been practicing for five hours, I had never been so easily distracted as I was that night. The sound of footsteps in the hall, the closing of a door, the howl of the lion wind that was tearing around the building in defiance of the edict that March must go out like a lamb, all contributed to my lack of concentration. I could not understand it, nor could I cope with it. Finally, in a mixture of exasperation and desperation, I decided to call it quits for that evening.

It was blowing a gale, as I came out, but I had never minded the wind. In fact, I found it exhilarating to have it buffeting my face and after I had walked a few steps, I felt refreshed and a little ashamed of myself for abandoning my practicing so early. I was more than half-minded to turn back when someone shrieked, "Lorrie MacIvor, oh, thank goodness. It's fate, that's what it is!"

Startled, I looked in the direction of the voice and found Amy Bartlett, a piano major, who lived on the floor above me at Finch Hall, my residence on campus. A short, dark, slightly plump girl, she always seemed a little disorganized and never more so than on this particular night. When she joined me she was breathing hard as if she had been

running; her short hair was in her eyes and the briefcase she had been clutching suddenly fell at my feet, disgorging some half dozen pages of music which were immediately caught by the wind.

"Oh, oh, oh, my God . . . my c—composition," she wailed, making futile grabs for them with one hand. Her other, I noticed, was in a sling.

I rushed after them and managed to retrieve them, saying as I thrust them back into her case, "What happened to your hand?"

"I fell . . . I've sprained it and I can't play tonight and we're working on the Brahms C-Minor Trio and Dario can stay . . . Bill's at the cello and we need you. You must come, Lorrie."

I sucked in a threatening smile. Amy Bartlett and Bill Rubin were chamber-music aficionados, but their efforts to form a group had been only minimally successful since their sounds did not measure up to their enthusiasm. However, thinking to let her down easily, I said, "I don't know the C-Minor."

"Don't know it . . ." she echoed. "You can read it, Lorrie. You can read anything, don't tell me differently. Please, it's been so difficult for poor Dario to get away. He's due to go to Tanglewood this summer and . . ." she broke off. "Do you know Dario Paull?"

"No, I don't."

"Well, you should. He's staying at Bill's this semester. He doesn't attend classes. He just came to study with Martinelli; he's a marvelous violinist."

"Really?" I was surprised. Martinelli's pupils didn't usually team up with Bill Rubin.

"Yes," Amy nodded and then went on to confirm my unexpressed opinion, "we've never had an artist of his caliber in our group—and actually, it's only because he wants to work on the Trio, but he hasn't been able to get away until tonight. You know how Martinelli schedules lessons—when he feels like it. We were to meet on Mon-

day and he scheduled a lesson. Wednesday the same thing happened. Fortunately, tonight Martinelli has food poisoning and Dario's free and I've sprained my hand!"

She looked so woeful that much as I wanted to return to my practicing, I did not have the heart to refuse her. "It won't last long, I hope. I've an early lesson with Mrs. Tynan," I said.

She gave a grateful smile. "Does that mean you'll do it?" she asked and, as I nodded, continued, "oh, that's wonderful, Lorrie, especially for Dario. It won't last long . . . two hours at the very most."

I glanced at my watch; it was eight o'clock. "Two hours is fine, but no more."

"Lovely," she said. "Thanks ever so much. We'll go on over to the Gate, then."

The Gate was the campus nickname for the studios which were located in the cottage that had once been the gate house to the large mansion, now serving as combined Admissions Office and reception rooms for Elkston. As we hurried along, I was having second thoughts about my quick acquiescence. I didn't know Bill Rubin very well, I had never met Dario Paull and I was never at my best with strangers. I stifled a short sigh. Even after two years at Elkston, I had very few friends and most of them were on the same level as Amy, more an acquaintance than a friend. I knew I was considered snobbish, but actually I was very shy and had been all my life. As an only child of older parents, I had been brought up largely by myself in a huge house with a large acreage surrounding it and no near neighbors. I did not meet any other children until I was enrolled in first grade and their boisterous attentions and their teasing only frightened me. I, on the other hand, was considered strange and my talent for music created another barrier.

During most of my school years, I spent my time either in the library reading or studying. I went home as soon as possible so that I might practice. I did not have girl friends

or boy friends; I was a solitary child and at Elkston, I was a solitary young woman—still much at a loss as to how to communicate with my fellow students. I had very few invitations to the parties which were given nearly every night on campus and I was just as glad of that for I never knew what to say to the boys who asked me to dance. I could not flirt with them as the other girls did and generally I ended up being silent. I did not expect that I would fare any better on this occasion, but, as I remembered with some relief, I was not attending a party. I was there merely to play and that would make the two hours bearable. However, even before I had my foot on the step leading up to the second-floor studio where Bill and his friend were waiting for us, I was hoping we would be finished earlier than the stipulated hour.

Only Bill Rubin was present when Amy and I came in on her bright announcement, "I've got her! Ta-ta-ta-ta-ta." Dropping her briefcase, she ran to him. "Aren't you going to give me a big kiss, dearie?"

"Sure thing," he assented cheerfully. He was a big, gangling redhead, twice the size of Amy and he emphasized the difference by bending nearly double as he smacked her on the cheek. "Hello, Lorrie," he said casually. "How's tricks?"

"Oh, all right," I said, wishing I could think of a smart reply.

"Some wind tonight," he commented.

"Oh, yes," I said. "It's quite strong."

"I hope it hasn't blown Dario out to sea. He should've been here by now," he said.

"Oh, goodness, do you think Martinelli's recovered?" Amy's round eyes became rounder and full of apprehension.

"Not a chance," Bill laughed. "He was sick as a dog. Dario'll probably be here in another couple of minutes." He looked at me. "Well, this is some sort of an occasion.

When Amy went out to recruit a pianist, I didn't think she'd bring in a major general."

"Oh, please," I said, feeling ill at ease under his gaze. His eyes were a dark green and nearly always full of laughter; there was no reason to think he was laughing at me, but, as usual, I was self-conscious. In an effort to overcome my awkwardness, I said, "Do you mind if I try the piano?"

"It will be honored," Bill said, with another of his low bows.

Amy said, "Don't tease her."

"But I'm not," he protested. "Any piano should be honored by the Clinton touch *and*," he emphasized, "I am not teasing you, Lorrie. You have it, girl. Didn't I say so when we heard her recital at the Camera?" He looked at Amy.

"You did," she nodded. "He did," she added, turning to me. "Bill's terribly critical, too. I wish you'd play some or, at least one, of the 'Transcendental Etudes,' while we're waiting. Would you, Lorrie?"

"I'd be delighted," I smiled, meaning it, for it would keep me from having to make conversation. "Which one would you like to hear?"

"'Mazeppa,'" Amy said promptly, adding with a slight sigh, "of course, it will sound like nothing on that beat-up old piano."

"On the contrary," Bill said, "it will sound like everything when she plays it."

My cheeks felt warm. Compliments always embarrassed me. Defensively, I started playing and immediately, the powerful chords of the piece brought me into my usual communion with Liszt, one of my favorite composers for all that Mrs. Tynan and other musical purists deplored his florid romanticism and what they termed his flamboyant exhibitionism. Liszt had passion and I had always responded to it, though rather defensively, since it was well-known that Barbary Clinton had built a great deal of her reputa-

tion on her interpretation of Liszt. There were, I knew, people at school who contended that I played him in order to emphasize my relationship, but even before I had known that Aunt Barbary existed, I had loved Liszt. On being taken to a concert at the age of three, I had come home and crawling onto the piano bench, I had picked out the first few bars of his Concerto No. 1 in E. Flat Major, trying to use both hands, which was one reason I had decided to play it at my April concert.

I was in the middle of "Mazeppa" when a gust of cold air hit me, registering the fact that the studio door had been opened. I was vaguely aware of whispers, but I went on playing to the end of the composition before looking up to find a man standing in the curve of the piano, staring at me. Meeting dark eyes under a heavy bar of brows, I was startled by the intensity of his gaze and also by one of those *déjà vu* feelings that something like this had happened before, even to the gust of cold air that had wafted through the room at his entrance.

Given my private thoughts, his first remark was extremely startling. "Where have we met?" he asked.

I studied his face. I had an impression of broadness—a low, wide forehead, heavy black hair springing back from a slight widow's peak and worn longer than was the current fashion for men on campus. His cheekbones were high, his nose straight, his mouth firm and neither full nor thin. There was a cleft in his chin and the bluish shadow of a beard on his firm jawline. He was not very tall, but he was beautifully proportioned. He looked to be either Spanish or Italian. I was confused by his appearance; I had not remembered that he was so dark. I said, "I think it was . . ." and then I broke off, even more confused than before. "I mean . . . I don't think we have met."

"You will now." Amy stepped forward. "Lorrie MacIvor, Dario Paull. You probably passed each other on campus."

"I guess that's it," he said doubtfully, as if he did not agree with her.

"Yes," I was equally doubtful, "I expect that must be it."

"Now that we have that settled," Bill said, "I think we'd better get to work."

He continued to stare at me, "Yes . . ." he said absently, and then he shook himself and turning to Amy, appeared to notice her for the first time. "Your hand . . . what's the matter?"

"Sprained it," she replied. "That's why Lorrie's here. I met her quite by chance and she's agreed to play for you. She only has a limited amount of time."

He gave me an appreciative smile. "That was good of you," he said.

"I'm glad to do it," I smiled back, liking to look at him, liking the sound of his voice, and wishing I was not wearing my practice clothes, which consisted of an old plaid skirt, a bulky, shapeless cardigan, a plain white shirt, battered saddle shoes, and ankle socks. In fact, I longed for the protection of my raincoat which was newer, but I quickly realized, not any more becoming because it was a drab olive which did nothing for my complexion or my blonde hair. With another twinge of regret, I thought that my hair must be a real mess for the wind had probably loosened it from its tight coronet of braids. An upward glance confirmed my suspicions by showing me several loose strands. Of course, I was not wearing makeup, for though I had put on some lipstick five hours earlier, it had probably disappeared by now. All in all, I was not at my best and inwardly I writhed with discomfort, wishing I could make an excuse that would take me away from his probably critical eye, and then I was surprised, for I had never cared how I appeared to any man. I did not date. I was not interested in men; I agreed with Mrs. Tynan, who said that a serious artist should live like a monk or a nun, but he was not "men" he was . . . Dario and then, I was

even more disoriented for I had wanted to call him by another name. Brusquely, far more brusquely than I had intended, I said, "Well, let's get to it, because I do have to leave."

"By all means," he said quickly.

We worked on the trio for an hour and a half, but when I finally lifted my fingers from the keys, I was surprised that the time had gone so quickly—surprised and a little regretful, for his playing was magnificent. He had a wonderful technique, but more than that, I could see that he had the same sort of communion with the composer that I enjoyed. Once the violin was tucked beneath his chin, it seemed to me that he became an extension of his instrument rather than the other way around; his fingering was amazingly agile, his sound spell-binding, in fact, I wanted to hear more of it, much more.

Amy said, "Well, Lorrie, you see we're letting you go earlier rather than later and thanks so much." Generously, she added, "I never heard that piano sound like that."

"Thank you," I replied, wishing heartily that I had not made such a point about time. I looked up at Dario Paull. "It was a pleasure to hear you," I said enthusiastically.

"And to hear you!" he remarked with equal enthusiasm. "I missed your recital. I'm sorry for that."

"You can hear her concert in April," Amy reminded him.

"I will, even if Martinelli schedules a lesson, which is what he did on your recital night."

"The Martinelli-Tynan feud," Bill pulled a face.

"Feud?" I questioned.

"Come, you mean you don't know about it?" Bill raised an eyebrow. "They are real rivals—at least, he resents her. I don't think she gives a damn."

"Oh?" I said. I wasn't really interested. I wanted to hear Dario Paull play again, but I was too shy to ask him and, having emphasized my need to get back to Finch

Hall, I was about to rise when he stepped forward and placed some music in front of me.

"Do you know this?" he asked.

I looked at it. It was the Schumann D-Minor Violin Sonata. "Not off-hand, but I can probably play it."

"Will you?"

Amy protested, "Now Dario . . ."

"Yes," I interrupted eagerly, "I'll be glad to play it." I glimpsed Amy's eyes and read laughter in them, laughter mingled with surprise. Bill looked equally surprised, but their opinions meant nothing to me. In fact, when I started playing again, both of them faded from my mind; I was caught up in the music and in the sheer beauty of Dario's performance.

In my concert-going life, I had heard some of the best violinists in the world, but I was willing to swear that none of them had the power to move me as he did and, at the same time, I was aware that my own playing was having a similar effect on him. I had accompanied other artists, but never before had I enjoyed such a rapport.

When we finally came to the end, again, I wanted to continue and I could have clapped my hands for joy when he slipped another piece of music in front of me—the Brahms D-Minor Sonata. With scarcely a moment for breath I launched into it and we were off again into our own little world of melody and then finally, finally, there was the "Kreutzer Sonata" and by the time we reached the rippling phrases of the third movement, my excitement was almost more than I could stand. I, who had loved music all my life had never, never, never been so incredibly moved by it. Strange images danced before my eyes. I was climbing, climbing, climbing up a mountain, leaping from peak to peak and not wanting to stop, wanting to go on forever with him by my side, with the compelling, tantalizing, enchanting sound of his violin forever in my ears and when, at last we finished, tears were running down my cheeks. I wanted to say something, but no words

would come to me. I was beyond them and so was he and I had the feeling that whatever heights I had reached, he had kept pace beside me.

"Lorrie," Amy spoke breathlessly, "we've got to go. The studio closes at twelve."

I looked at them dazedly, wondering who they were and why they were there. It took a full minute before I recovered enough to say, "Oh, yes . . ." and then, their words registered. "Twelve?" I questioned. "It couldn't be twelve!"

"No," Dario was equally surprised. "It's not twelve, yet."

"Right," Amy winked at him, "it's six minutes past."

"My goodness, how could it have gotten so late so early?" I cried. We all laughed, then, but shakily, and for once Bill had no wisecrack to make.

He looked at us. "That was a real privilege," he said softly. "I haven't heard music-making like that for a long time."

"No," Amy remarked in a small voice, "not ever, I'd like to bet."

I had no comment to make. The music was still echoing through my head and glancing at Dario Paull, I had the impression that he was similarly affected.

A sharp knock at the door, followed by the voice of Ed, the janitor, "Hey, in there, c'mon, I gotta lock up," sent us out of the building.

"I guess we'd better be getting back to Finch," Amy murmured reluctantly. "You coming, Lorrie?"

I did not want to go. At that particular moment, I could not conceive of going to bed. I was too excited. I sighed. "I expect I'd better."

"No," Dario commanded. "Not yet. We've got to unwind." He smiled down at me. "Would you like to go for a drive? I'm parked over there . . . just on the other side of the gates," he pointed.

"They have hours at Finch Hall," Amy protested. "We

ought to be in now. Mrs. Vale is mighty hard on latecomers."

She was not exaggerating. Mrs. Vale was in charge of Finch Hall and she took her duties very seriously. As one of the girls said, she was a glutton for punishing. I had never tangled with her, but I knew I would tonight. I did not care. "I would love to go for a drive." I said.

Amy gave me a surprised look, but all she said was, "Tell you what, Lorrie, I'll leave the garden door open for you, only be quiet when you come in."

"I will," I said gratefully. "Thanks."

"Thank you," she smiled, beckoning to Bill. "You'll walk me back?"

"Sure thing," he looked at me. "Thanks again for helping out." Turning to Dario, he gave him a smart salute, "See you, Captain Paull."

"Captain?" I asked as Amy and Bill left us. "Were you?"

"Yes," he replied. "In the Air Force."

"It must've been Korea."

"It was," he answered. "Let's go." He slipped an arm around my shoulders and started toward the gates.

I took a step and then I stopped short. Suddenly, inexplicably, I was terrified. A shiver ran through me. "Where are we going?" I asked through stiff lips.

"To my car," he said. "What's the matter?"

"I . . ." I paused, unable to answer him. The feeling had gone as quickly as it had emerged. "Nothing." I started walking again.

"You shivered, I felt it. Are you afraid of me?"

I looked up at him. There was a light by the gate and it shone full in his face. "No," I breathed. "How could I be? It must have been a goose over my grave."

He chuckled, "Are you superstitious?"

"Not very. Are you?"

"Not very," he grinned, pushing open the gate. "Here she is," he led me to a small, cream-colored convertible.

Taking out his keys, he opened the door for me. "Sheila meet Lorrie," he said as I slipped inside.

"Sheila?" I inquired. "Why?"

"That's her name—I don't know why. It seemed appropriate."

"I don't know why it should," I laughed, "but it does." Inwardly, I was surprised. I had never found it easy talking to any of the men in my classes, but I felt so comfortable with him.

He climbed into the driver's seat and in another few moments, we were nearing the main highway. It wound before us, black and badly lighted, for the usual stream of cars had drained to a mere trickle. I was glad of that, glad not to see headlights flashing out of the darkness. It would have spoiled the sense of togetherness I was experiencing with him which seemed to grow stronger every mile we covered. I had an odd desire to leave Elkston far behind, and just as I had not wanted him to cease playing, I did not want him to stop driving. I wanted to say, "Faster, faster . . ." but that was hardly necessary because he was driving fast but expertly.

"Where shall we go?" he asked suddenly.

Startled, I answered, "I didn't know you wanted to go anywhere."

"But we have to talk . . . don't we?"

"Yes," I agreed breathlessly and found myself as eager to stop as I had been to continue on that winding highway.

"Nothing's open at this hour, at least I don't think it is."

"There's Roseanna's," he suggested hesitantly.

"Roseanna's?" I repeated dubiously.

"I know it's not a very nice place, but it's open all night."

"That's in it's favor," I conceded. "Very well. Let's go."

"Good girl," he approved.

I mulled that comment over in my mind. "Good girls" didn't usually go to Roseanna's Tavern, particularly with a

comparative stranger. No, not a stranger, not since our hours in the studio and we did have to talk, even if that conversation took place in a sleazy roadhouse with a rowdy clientele—and which was strictly off-limits to students.

I had heard that Roseanna's Tavern was run by a man named Ricki Marillo. He had the reputation of being a petty gangster. There could be nothing but petty gangsters in Elkston, where the scope for crime was small. In the tavern, it took the form of gambling—cards, dice, roulette and one-arm bandits, all in a sequestered room, known and ignored by the local, well-bribed police. There were also some bedrooms upstairs, which could be rented for the night, but which were generally hired by the hour. Sometimes prostitutes who worked the bar brought their clients upstairs. But non-professionals used them, too. Amy had friends who had been in them. She told me that they had stressed the hardness of the beds. They had also mentioned cracked washbowls and toilets that didn't work. She had laughed about their discomfort, but I had found something singularly repellant in those hasty couplings which had nothing but sexual hunger as a motivation. I was in complete agreement with my mother that such intimacies should happen only after marriage to a man one loved. I had said so much to Amy and had been extremely affronted when she had asked curiously, "You're still a virgin, Lorrie?"

I had been even more affronted by the laughter with which she had greeted my prideful, "Of course!"

"For goodness sake," she had breathed. "I think you must certainly be in the minority at Elkston."

It was because of my membership in this particular minority that I did feel several compunctions when we drove into the parking lot of the tavern. Mother had always said that one should avoid the appearance of evil and most of the girls who came there . . . but I would not think of that for Dario had opened my door and was waiting to hand me out and it was very important that I not give him

the impression that I was a prude. Smiling gaily, I took his hand, and I had to bite down a little cry, for a whole series of pulsations skittered through me. I had never experienced such a feeling before. I was glad of the darkness for I felt as if my face were on fire and knew I must be blushing furiously, though I was not sure why.

By the time we were walking into the imitation "Early American" purloins of the tavern, I was feeling calmer, mainly, I suspected, because he was not holding my hand. Though it was near one in the morning, the place was full of people. Loud talking and louder laughter rolled over us like waves and tables were hard to find, but a seedy looking maitre d', cheered by a five-dollar bill, brought us to a spot near the fireplace. As I sat down opposite Dario, I saw that the flame from the gas-logs was reflected in his eyes. An excitement for which I had no name invaded me.

A girl in a low-cut black satin blouse and tight toreador pants brought us a list of drinks. I felt her knowing eyes on me and was uneasily positive that she expected us to go upstairs soon. A second later, I wondered why such a thought had crossed my mind and, with a surge of panic, I was half-jolted out of the strange mood that had brought me there. I wanted to leave. A spate of excuses formed on my tongue only to dissolve as quickly as pipe-blown soap-bubbles when I looked into Dario's flame-lit eyes.

"What'll ya have?" the girl asked wearily.

"A couple of stingers," he said impatiently, as if he wished she would let us alone. Then, he added quickly, "I'm sorry, Lorrie. What do you want?"

One drink was very like another to me because I rarely had them. "A stinger'll be fine."

The waitress drifted away and we looked at each other again. "Tell me about yourself, Lorrie MacIvor," he commanded, keeping his eyes on mine.

"Aside from my music, there's not much to tell," I answered.

"Nonsense," he exclaimed, almost angrily. "There has

to be a great deal to tell. You're not a walking keyboard. You're a very lovely young woman."

"Lovely?" I grimaced, my earlier qualms over my disheveled appearance back with me. "I think I must look awful. I didn't expect to do anything except practice tonight."

"You could never look awful," he contradicted softly. "You have beautiful eyes. They're almost violet, aren't they? And your hair—a real golden blonde. I'm glad you didn't cut it." He touched my disordered braids.

Self-consciously, I muttered, "I'm not always glad. It's heavy in the summer."

"Do you always braid it?"

"Most of the time."

"It must be very long."

"It is."

"Rapunzel," he smiled.

"R-Rapunzel," I repeated. A dormant memory stirred, sending a tentacle to the surface of my mind. "It seems to me that you once called me . . ." Flustered, I broke off. I was remembering something that had never happened!

"Yes," he agreed eagerly, "I, too, remember . . ." then, he looked puzzled. "I'm not sure. Just for a moment . . ."

"Just for a moment," I echoed, "like a shadow seen before the light's turned off."

"Exactly," he exclaimed. "Do you know, if I were my Italian grandmother, I'd say there was a *strega* abroad tonight."

"A *strega*? That's a witch, isn't it?"

"Yes," he smiled.

"Do you believe in witchcraft?" I asked, glad to find a topic of conversation that could cover and perhaps quell another visitation of those pulsations which had arisen in the parking lot. They were growing stronger; it was becoming difficult for me to concentrate, but I had to, for

he was speaking and I had not heard half of what he was saying.

" . . . witchcraft. I've never believed in much of anything since . . ." His face darkened and there was a brooding look in his eyes. Then, he forced a smile. "No, I don't believe in witchcraft," he stated, "but maybe I'm being too dogmatic."

"Oh, my father would certainly agree with you," I said. "He is an agnostic with strong leanings toward atheism, for all that there was a witch in our family."

"When?"

I sensed his interest was only polite, that the real communication between us had nothing to do with words or even with the music that had brought us together. "Around 1692. Her name was Ellen Crowne."

"1692? That was in the days of the Salem witches," he commented.

"That's right. She wasn't really a witch."

"Just a poor senile old woman, I expect," he sighed. "Like most of the others."

"No, she was young and psychic. She could tell the future. They probably would've hanged her, if they had caught her."

"They didn't catch her?" My hand was lying on the table and he covered it with his own. He had slender fingers. The nails were cut short. That surprised me; I would have thought they were longer. I didn't know why.

"No," I said and was annoyed because my voice was so muted and breathy. "She . . . she hid out at . . ." I had to concentrate again and I was having difficulty because of his hand on mine. "She hid out at Clinton House until all the furor died down."

"Clinton House? Is that an inn or a hotel?" he asked.

"Neither . . . it's our home."

"Where is it?"

"Near Marblehead," I said. "Not the house that Ellen

knew. That burned down in 1768—ours was built during the American Revolution.”

“Ah, hoary with history!” he smiled.

“Not very interesting history, except for Barbary Clinton.”

“Barbary Clinton!” he repeated, his eyes narrowing.

“It seems to me that I’ve heard . . .”

“The pianist,” I clarified.

“Oh, yes, of course, the famous pianist. She’s related to you, isn’t she? Bill mentioned that.”

“My great-great aunt.”

“I saw a picture of her somewhere . . . you resemble her, don’t you?”

“There’s a family resemblance.”

“And your music . . .”

“That’s my own,” I spoke more sharply than I had intended.

“You’re being defensive,” he observed. “But I don’t blame you, I expect you’ve had to contend with that comparison all your life.”

“Yes,” I admitted with a little grimace.

“It’s ridiculous!” he said explosively. “It excludes all the hard work you’ve done to attain your technique.”

“Thank you for understanding,” I said gratefully.

“Everyone ought to understand,” he said. “But it won’t matter when you start performing in public. You’ll see that they’ll forget all about Barbary Clinton.”

“I don’t think that,” I said.

“I do. You have a remarkable talent.”

“I’ve never heard a violinist like you,” I said. “Playing with you . . .” Much to my embarrassment, I blinked tears out of my eyes. “You know . . .” I gave him a tremulous smile. “I . . . can’t describe what it meant to me.”

His hand tightened on mine. “I know what your playing meant to me.”

I nodded. The union we had achieved was beyond any description either of us could have given. Furthermore, I

felt as though we were still experiencing it, only in a different way.

The girl brought us our drinks and looking at the frosty glasses, I was momentarily amazed. I could not imagine why I had ordered anything. I hated the taste of alcohol. My feelings must have been mirrored in my eyes for he said, "It's cooling . . . crème de menthe and brandy." Raising his glass, he added, "Cheers."

"Cheers," I echoed dutifully and took a very small sip. "You're right," I discovered. "It does have a sort of cooling taste. I like mint."

"Yes, it's refreshing."

"Tell me about you," I said and was inwardly amazed at my bravery, but, of course, I knew him too well to be shy. No, I reminded myself suddenly, I did not know him—we had met that night.

"There's not much to tell," he shrugged. "I was born in New York. Before the war, my parents and I lived abroad. My father was a career diplomat, attached to embassies in Paris and Rome. My mother's family was Italian, but they had lived in the United States for two generations. Still, she loved Rome and hated to leave it. However, we had to return in 1940. I attended the Brown- ing School and later Juilliard. In 1944, my father was summoned back to Paris; his plane was shot down. I joined the Air Force in 1950; I was in Korea, as I told you, and I was listed as missing. It was an error, but it proved too much for my mother to take. Her heart was weak." He had spoken coldly, dispassionately, but I had the feeling that the emotion missing from his brief account was in his music.

I said, "That was hard."

He nodded, "Yes."

"You haven't told me how you became interested in music."

He frowned into his drink. "I expect I was born interested. It surprised my family. There were no musicians on

either side, but when I was three or four, so they told me, we passed a violin store in Paris and I wouldn't leave the window. Nothing would do but I must have a violin. When I got it, I started picking out little tunes—so they sent me to a teacher."

"Oh," I said softly, "that's a lovely way for it to happen."

"It's not particularly unusual," he commented. "I imagine you had much the same experience."

"In a sense."

"Would you like another drink?"

I glanced down at my glass and was surprised to find it empty. "No, it must be very late."

He looked at his watch. "Not very. It's a few minutes past two."

"Two?" I blinked at him. "*You* don't call that late?"

"Depending on how you look at it," he grinned. "It can also be called early."

"I have a lesson at eight."

"Do you want to leave?"

It was on the tip of my tongue to say that I must, but looking into his eyes, I found I could not make my tongue obey me. I shook my head.

"Good," he returned with a pleased smile, "neither do I." Signaling to the waitress, he ordered another couple of stingers.

In the past, alcohol had always made me sleepy, but my second drink had quite the opposite effect; it made me more alert, more aware of the man opposite me and particularly aware of the fact that he had lifted his hand from mine only to summon the waitress, putting it back again quickly, almost as if he were afraid to lose it. There was no danger of that; I loved the touch of his hand on mine. I loved sitting across from him, looking at him, and the more I looked at him, the more certain I was that I had seen him before—nor was it a face in the crowd, a passing

glance. I had known him, I was positive of that, but where?

Taking his hand from mine, he touched my hair. "Rapunzel . . ." he said ardently. "How long is it, your beautiful hair?"

I tried to laugh, but the laughter died on my lips. "It's long, but I don't expect you could climb up it, hand over hand, the way it happened in the fairy tale. She must have had very strong hair."

"Very." He smiled and ran a finger down my cheek.

Another series of pulsations followed in its wake. I longed for him to touch me again. I longed . . . I flushed and for want of something to do, sipped my drink.

"Another round?" he inquired.

"No . . . I've had enough." I said.

There was a wild burst of laughter across the room. Startled, I looked around to see a big rough-looking man wrestling with a blonde girl, who was giggling a lot. They were both very drunk. "Put your hand where it belongs!" she finally squealed.

"Tha's wha' I'm doin'," he mumbled.

Dario set down his glass. "It's too noisy in here."

"Yes," I agreed, resenting the shattering of our mood.

His eyes were on mine. "I don't want to take you home."

I wanted to say that he must, I wanted to mention my lesson. I opened my mouth and closed it on all the words I didn't really want to utter, no, not at all! "I . . . I don't want to go home." I whispered. Then, incredibly, amazingly, I said what had been in my mind ever since I had first seen him. "I . . . only want to be with you." Inside of me, there was shock, but beneath the shock, I knew that what I was saying was right.

His eyes glowed, "Will you . . . be with me, then?"

"Yes."

"Come." He rose and stepping toward my side of the table, he reached for my hands. For a second, I was

frightened. I said, "No." Then, when I was on my feet and standing close to him, I wanted to be still closer. There was music in my ears, the music of a violin and a piano—he was the violin and I . . . I was the violin, too, the instrument he would hold in his hands.

He glanced around him at the grimy walls and the drunken customers. His lip curled in disgust. "It's a miserable place, but there's nowhere else we can go."

"No," I agreed. "There's nowhere else we can go."

We were shown upstairs by a dark, round little woman. Briskly, she opened the door of a corner room. "That'll be twenty-five smackers in advance," she said. "It's five an hour, afterwards, fifty for the whole night." Her eyes widened as he counted out five tens, then they fastened on me and she grinned knowledgeably, her bright black eyes moving up and down my body. I knew what she was thinking—and I didn't care.

A day earlier, I'd have been horrified by her and all she stood for. A day earlier, the idea of coming to such a dive would have revolted me—even two hours ago, I could not have envisioned it. In that moment, I could only wish her downstairs in her cubby-hole of an office so that what she was imagining could take place, but not in the way she was doubtlessly imagining it. My feelings must have been written large upon my face for suddenly, she turned and scuttled out. I heard her giggling as she hurried down the hall.

"I'm sorry about her," he said.

"Don't be," I answered. "She doesn't matter."

"No," he agreed. He looked around the room and gave a mock shudder. "A real dump!" he exclaimed.

He was right. It was a ghastly place, bright red and white paper, patterned to resemble damask and in a cellophane finish, which made it doubly garish, covered the walls. The furniture was battered and the double bed sagged in the middle. However, because we were in a corner, four

windows facing south and east brought the incandescent moonlight into the room, making it unnecessary for us to leave the center bulb burning. He switched it off quickly and then stepped to my side, drawing me into his arms. We embraced with lips and bodies, straining against each other urgently. There was no need for words.

It didn't seem like the first time we had been together or the first time I had ever been so close to any man. I could guess what he wanted when I felt his hands on the buttons of my cardigan. Obediently, I, who had been so compulsively modest that I had never even undressed in front of the girls in gym class at college, stood still as he removed my clothes, folding them neatly and putting them on a table near the window. When I was naked, he took the pins from my hair and gently eased the rubber bands from the ends of my braids. Separating the strands, he held the heavy blonde weight of them in his two hands, then brought it to his lips, releasing it seconds later. It fell to the middle of my back. Running his hands through it, he whispered, "Rapunzel . . . Rapunzel . . ." Gathering me in his arms, he lifted me easily and carried me to the bed.

He was quick in his own undressing and I was glad of that for it seemed as if I could not wait, as if I had waited too long already for this merging which would unite us, body and soul.

Later, as we lay in each other's arms, I said, "Such a lovely moon . . ."

"Yes," he murmured, his lips against my cheek. "Beautiful."

"It's so bright . . . almost like the sun."

He tensed and sat up suddenly. "No, not like the sun . . . there . . . there's nothing like the sun." There was a terrible anguish in his voice and dimly I understood it, understood, too, the sadness that had invaded him, a sadness which I had to banish. I drew his head against my breast. "Darling, love, it's all over now, all over." I

didn't know what made me say those words I didn't understand, but the urge to say them was overwhelming. I stroked his hair and kissed him again and again. "It's all over, all over, my dearest, dearest love."

He clutched me. "Is it?"

"Yes, yes, yes . . ." I punctuated each assurance with another kiss.

"Oh, my love," he groaned. "I can't let you go, not yet."

"You must never let me go," I said and knew that long ago I had said much the same thing, knew, too, that I had not been able to help him, but it was different now. As I had done long ago, I continued to hold him against my breast, murmuring little endearments.

Then, he began to kiss my fingers and the palms of my hands and my momentary sadness was vanquished in the excitement of being with him.

I had been sleeping, but the loud gunning of a motor awakened me and I had a moment of utter terror because the windows were framing a pale gray sky. In the distance, through the unfamiliar silhouettes of trees, I saw the faint pinkness, heralding the rising sun. Incomprehensible despair flooded through me. Twining my arms around the neck of the man beside me, I sobbed, "No, no, no, you shan't go."

He opened his eyes immediately and now, it was he who comforted the agony and grief I did not understand. "It won't happen . . . not this time," he said uncertainly, then, finding me still trembling, he began to kiss my tears away, small kisses which grew more urgent, as, fully aroused, he pulled me against him. Equally eager to respond to his demands, I clung to him and, as I had even while yielding my virginity to him a few hours earlier, I reached my climax simultaneously with him. We fell asleep, clasped tightly together.

I awakened in the brilliant sunshine to find him beside

me still. I could hardly believe in his presence. It seemed to me as if he should have been gone and I, left grieving. He understood that feeling, himself. "It's as though we've been dancing to an old tune, forgotten until now . . ."

"I've never believed in anything," I whispered. "Yet I know . . . we've been together before."

"I know it, too," he agreed. "There's no other explanation."

Later, the terrors of the night passed out of our minds—but our closeness remained; our lives had become entwined in those brief hours and our span of reality had narrowed to each other. We were not, however, willing to remain in that ugly room. Consequently, we left but not for my lesson, not for Elkton. We drove in the opposite direction and found an inn on a country road. It was a charming little place, but I remember very little about it. I only remember that in the hours that followed we loved and slept and loved again.

It was not until the afternoon of the next day that we left the inn, walking arm in arm to his car, embracing as he opened the door for me, embracing again as we slid into our seats, sitting close together, as we headed back toward Elkston. We had no intention of remaining on campus. It would have been impossible for me to concentrate on my music. He felt the same way about his work with Martinelli. "I would see your face and hear your voice, my Lorrie," he said.

We were not sure what we were going to do after we left the school. It did not matter. All that mattered was that we were together.

He parked outside Finch Hall, while I went up to my room. I hoped I would not run into the sharp-tongued Mrs. Vale. I was too happy to contend with the inevitable accusations she would hurl at me, but the minute I stepped inside, she confronted me with the swiftness of a pounce, arms akimbo, the two gullies that ran from nose to mouth more pronounced than usual, her small narrow eyes mere

slits in her pale face. "Mrs. Tynan has been calling for two days," she rasped.

I felt a twinge of guilt, but only a twinge. "I wasn't near a phone," I said defiantly.

"Where were you?" she shrilled. "Don't you know that what you've done is strictly against regulations?" With biting satisfaction, she snapped, "I want you out of this residence, Miss MacIvor. I don't want your kind around."

"I'm going," I said blithely, as I started up the stairs. "I just need to get my clothes and I'll be off. I'll send for the rest of my things later." I was aware of her furious gaze as I went up the stairs and faced it when I came down.

"You know you're finished at Elkston, don't you?" she said in acidly triumphant tones. She was standing directly in front of me, as I reached the last step.

"Yes, I know," I nodded happily. "Please, won't you stand aside. He's waiting for me."

"He? You . . . little slut. You . . ."

I didn't hear her second epithet for I was out the door and down the walk to Dario's car. I threw my suitcase in the back seat and climbed in beside him. I imagine that Mrs. Vale must have found many more names to hurl after me, if she saw me melt into his arms and kiss him lingeringly before he started the car.

We drove to Bill's apartment then. I was glad that he was in class because though his reaction would not have been virulent, it would definitely have been curious and most certainly vociferous. As it was, Dario went in and came out in record time. Getting into the car, he remarked, "Well, we're on our way." Then, in a low voice he added, "Lorrie, my darling," and reached for me. Looking into his eyes, I knew that he, like myself, still needed the reassurance of touching to be sure that what was happening to us was real.

Until we left the campus, our main motivation had been to break all ties with the college, at least for the time being.

However, once we were back on the road, we did make plans. We decided that he would stay with me at my home for a day or two, so that we could explain matters to my parents. Then, we were going to go to New York and get married. We had made no other decisions. There was a reason for that—it was the same reason that kept us from talking about our present lives, our circumstances, anything. Once we were alone, conversation became difficult. We didn't want to talk, we only wanted to make love, but even though our feelings were certainly sensual, it was not merely our passion that bound us together, it was those fragments of memory centering around a time when we had loved and lost each other and I knew that in the back of our minds, there was a lingering fear that it might happen again.

Clinton House is some five hours distant from Elkston, but we let another day elapse before we reached it. The interim was spent partially at a newly-built motor court. The facilities were bright and shining, but that is about all I can say about it. I don't remember what the room looked like. I only remember that our third night together was equally as glorious as the other two.

It was not until we were nearing the fork in the road that would bring us to the gates of Clinton House that I came up out of my euphoria with a name on my lips—Great-Aunt Maude. I had described my parents to Dario, but I had not mentioned her yet and I felt I ought to warn him. I did it with great reluctance, for to mention Great-Aunt Maude was to cast a shadow on my sun.

In addition to opposing my musical ambitions, she cherished a grudge against me that made life very difficult whenever she was in residence at Clinton House, where, as a member of the family, she always came after her many trips. Her attitude was partially based on an incident which had occurred when I was eight. I did not understand

it at the time. I still did not understand it, even though I could remember it perfectly.

It had taken place in Aunt Barbary's room. In the years since her death, many people had begged the family to open her room to the public and finally visiting hours had been established. The chamber, the music room, drawing room, and dining room were on view for three hours every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon from May to October. Though the practice was a source of considerable annoyance to my parents, I could understand why so many musically minded people loved Aunt Barbary's room. Seeing it awakened a sense of pride in them, for few American musicians had attained her celebrity.

It was a beautifully spacious chamber; situated at the end of the hall, it had its own sitting room, but it is her bedroom that everyone wanted to see, for it was there that she spent the last two years of her life, evidently yielding entirely to the reclusive streak in her nature that, during her years of concertizing had kept her from mingling with any member of her vast audience, not excluding the heads of state that came to applaud her. Those who wrote about her in the music journals of the period often said that she had appeared from nowhere and retired to nowhere, but of course Clinton House was not nowhere. I think that many of the people who came to see her room were surprised that it was so ordinary, by which I mean that she did not sleep in a coffin like Sarah Bernhardt. However, the furniture was lovely—some of it early American, including the canopied bed, and some Victorian: the armoire and the huge double desk. In front of the fireplace with its pretty Delft tiles, was a chaise longue. There were seats below each window and there is a view of the gardens from the side windows and, in common with my own room which was at the other end of the hall, the front windows faced the driveway.

On the walls were paintings of her, including the famous Sargent portrait; there were photographs of her at the piano

and in glass cases, there were all the medals, orders and jewelry she received from the "crowned heads of Europe," as the press of the time delighted in terming those vanished monarchs. There were also framed letters from Queen Victoria, two complimentary and a third lamenting the fact that Barbary had refused to be presented. There was a Liszt score with the words, "In appreciation and love," scrawled across it by the composer and there was a poem written to her by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow entitled, "On the Occasion of a Boston Concert."

Some of the gowns she wore at her concerts hung in the armoire, and on the bed were heavy damask curtains, the snowy linen sheets, the thick woolen blankets, the huge down pillows with their fancifully embroidered slips and the silken coverlet that had been on it the night she died.

As a child, I had loved Aunt Barbary's room; I never visited it when the tourists came, but at other times, I used to spend long hours in it. I felt very peaceful there. I was under an injunction never to touch or to move anything and I never did. I curled up in the window seat and I would read or study and sometimes, I just liked to sit there, thinking about nothing in particular.

Then, one day, Aunt Maude came back from one of her many journeys; she was always traveling and she never announced her departures or her arrivals. One day, she would be gone and on another, she would be back. On the day I am speaking about, I was sitting in my favorite spot, when she came into the room. Since the seat is in a deep alcove, she did not see me. She went to the bed and, to my horrified amazement, she threw back the cover and sank down on it, propping herself up against the pillows. Then, with a long sigh, she looked toward the door and said, "Where are you . . . where are you? I had such hopes of finding you? Patia told me she could bring you back, but she didn't succeed. I expect she's a fake like all the others. . . . Will you ever come again? I do so want you!" She

stretched out her arms. "Oh, God, God, God, I need you, I need you."

Watching her speak to the empty air frightened me so much that I dropped the book I had been reading and she, turning, saw me. She let out a horrid cry—it sounded like a squawk. Jumping from the bed she ran to the window, pulling me out of my seat. Striking me hard across the face twice, she screamed, "You nasty little sneak! How dare you spy on me?"

"I . . . I wasn't . . . I d—didn't . . ." I began to sob.

"You were!" she accused. "Don't dare to contradict me." She dragged me into the hall. "Don't you ever dare to set foot in this room again, not as long as you live! Do you understand?"

Terrified, I ran weeping to my mother. She soothed me and then she went to speak with Aunt Maude. When she came back, she had a plate of brownies and a big glass of milk for me, but she said, "I don't think you'd better go to Barbary's room, not while your Aunt Maude is here, darling. Fortunately, she never stays long and then you can go there as often as you choose."

I did not avail myself of that permission. Watching Aunt Maude talk to no one had frightened me and given me a distaste for the room. After that I never went near it. I wished that I could avoid my Aunt Maude as easily, but that was not possible, for whenever she came home, she took a particular delight in tormenting me. She would smile contemptuously at my youthful awkwardness, telling my parents it was a waste of time to teach me music because I would never get my clumsy fingers to obey me. Because of the incident I have just described, she contended that I was an odd secretive child, who had it all "behind the ears" and could not be trusted. However, she had added, "You'll never be able to keep anything from me, Lora. I know you through and through."

Oddly enough this often proved to be true. Sometimes I felt as if she could see right into my mind—though I told

myself that this was pure nonsense and superstition—people could not read other people's thoughts.

She hated to hear me practicing and made a point of stamping down the hall and slamming the door of the music room, as if she could not bear the noise. She taunted me with my family resemblance to Aunt Barbary. "You're nothing like her. You're only a pale replica and if you think because you have a few features in common, you've also inherited her genius, you're wrong. The best you can ever hope to achieve is a teaching post, if you've the gumption to attempt that."

Once when her ridicule became too much for me to bear, I had jumped up from the piano and pushed her out of the room, causing her, she insisted, to fall heavily on the hall floor. However, even in my blind fury, I had noticed that rather than falling, she had deliberately thrown herself down.

I was in disgrace because of what she termed my "unprovoked attack." My punishment consisted of being locked in my room for a whole day. To me, it was a grievously unfair thing for my parents to have done, especially since I had explained what had happened. I could hardly believe they had taken her word against mine, for I was compulsively truthful, but, it seemed they had. I alternated between weeping and denouncing them as cruel tyrants. Then, late in the afternoon, my mother came up with her usual panacea of brownies and milk. I still remember her gentle, consoling smile as she sat down next to me, saying, "I think, Lorrie, that I'd better explain to you about your Aunt Maude."

She related a strange story, and if it did not cause me to feel as sympathetic toward her as my mother obviously did, at least it gave me some insight into her actions. As mother delicately phrased it, she was not "all there."

Years before I was born, Maudie MacIvor had been a charming and beautiful young girl, "tawny-haired with big hazel eyes," Mother said. In 1918, she had been engaged

to marry a soldier, Lieutenant Hugh Sterling, who had come back from World War I safe and eager to set a date for their wedding. After a year of fear and apprehension, she was ecstatically happy—until the night in early May when she visited the sickbed of Great-Aunt Barbary.

Maude, who had always adored and revered the famous concert pianist, had been nursing her through a severe case of influenza, not the dread Spanish influenza, but still a debilitating sickness for a woman of seventy-two. Sometime in the hours Maude had spent in her chamber, Barbary Clinton had died. No one was sure when she had passed away, since they were too concerned over Maude, who had been found lying near the door in a dead faint.

It had been difficult to revive her and she did not seem to know what had caused her seizure. The family, aware of her deep affection for Barbary, put it down to shock over her sudden death. Maude's subsequent actions seemed to lend support to this theory, for she spent the following three weeks in bed, speaking to no one and eating practically nothing. When, at last she emerged from her chamber, she was a changed woman. Though she still looked as beautiful as ever, she seemed to have aged internally. Before she had gone into Barbary's room, she had been a bubbly, heedless young girl. After her recovery, she became cold, silent and brooding. She broke her engagement, sending Hugh Sterling away with no explanation at all for her decision. Furthermore, she developed a strange interest in psychic matters and notwithstanding the ridicule she received from her nephew, my father, she spent a great deal of time and money consulting mediums and self-styled occultists.

For the last thirty years she had used most of her income to travel the world in search of psychics whose fame had reached her ears. She would leave the house on the spur of the moment and take a ship around the world if she heard of a particularly gifted seer. In 1920, she had visited Aleister Crowley at Cefalu, but she did not remain at his notorious villa; instead she went to Ireland to seek out

William Butler Yeats, whose old connection with the Order of the Golden Dawn must have given her the impression that he was an "adept" in High Magic, though what her interest in this particular subject could be, no one could guess. The poet refused to see her, but undiscouraged, she had had seances with several well-known Irish mediums. Later, she traveled in England and still later, she visited India. She had also been in Egypt, Greece, and Turkey. In the United States, she consulted the famous medium Madame Patia Grange, who had a studio in New York at Carnegie Hall.

Aside from her obsession, she appeared normal enough. At fifty-one, she was still a most attractive woman and amazingly young-looking. She had kept her figure; she was graceful and light on her feet. Men looked at her, but she never looked back. She was not interested in men. She had no friends and no social life. She appeared to have a secret existence which she shared with no one. My father likened her to one of those ancient Greek pythonesses, who, having communicated with Apollo, were touched with ecstasy. It was, he insisted perhaps too strongly, much different from ordinary madness.

I had always expected that were I ever to fall in love, it would be extremely embarrassing and even dangerous to explain my great-aunt's eccentricities to my intended. Yet, feeling as I did about Dario, and the life we once must have shared, I was positive that he, above all others, would understand that her problems were nothing I might inherit. Indeed, my growing sense of having lived before was casting an entirely new light on my present life. Obviously, this life was one of many, but I did not want to think about that—there was fear attached to that thought. As I had hoped, Dario's reaction to my halting and, in spite of my new convictions, nervous description of Aunt Maude's peculiarities, was only sympathetic.

It was not until we came in sight of the rise of land where our property began that I actually became aware of

what I was doing, coming home to a family which believed me to be in the throes of finishing my spring semester at Elkston and preparing for my concert. I was sure, too, that my parents would not fail to note the change in me. I had left home a tense, cool, even austere young woman. I knew that this image had vanished and though it probably would have been wiser to retain it and not let them see that I was quite so rapturously in love, I could hide my feelings only until Dario touched me. However, I was quick to tell myself, it did not matter what my parents thought. My life was my own.

"Oh, Dario," I breathed, as we turned down the small, unpaved private road that was bounded on one side by our fences and on the other by a row of tall elm trees, "I do love you so very much."

"I love you, Lorrie," he responded fervently and kissed me. It proved to be an unwise move for the car hit a depression in the road, swerved out of control and it was only his quick reflexive action that kept us from piling into a tree. He stopped immediately. "Are you hurt?" he asked anxiously.

"Not at all," I assured him.

His face was pale. "God, I could've been your death."

"Well, you weren't." I stroked his cheek and he kissed the palm of my hand. Then, we were in each other's arms again. Finally, reluctantly, we separated and he started the car again.

As we drew closer to the drive leading up to the house, a strange depression settled over me. I wanted to blame it on my nervousness at seeing my family, but instinctively, I knew it went deeper than that—that it might have its roots in that mysterious past we both shared. "Oh," I sighed, "if we could only remember something of . . . of what we knew before. We ought to be able to remember."

I met his eyes in the rear-view mirror and found them grave. "Even believing this sort of thing has been a big step forward for me, Lorrie," he said. "I don't know

much about it, but something tells me we shouldn't try to know." He frowned, adding, "I don't think I want to know."

I had a deep conviction he was right, that not knowing was far better than knowing. "Yes," I said positively, "*I'm* sure we weren't meant to know, but still . . ."

He gave me a brief smile. "You know what they say about curiosity and cats."

"Yes," I made myself smile back, but my depression increased. We were almost to the turn-off and at that moment I wished I were a thousand miles away.

Up until the end of the thirties, the tall, iron gates of Clinton House had remained locked until the gatekeeper ascertained a visitor's identity. In 1952, there were no gatekeepers and the gates were always unlocked. Dario pushed them back and then we whirled around the curving driveway.

I saw his eyes widen as we came in sight of the house. It is a Palladian mansion, symmetrical and austere outside and of an imposing size. There are many rooms on its three floors, for it was built in the expectation of a large family, a child each year. However, neither the Clintons who commissioned it nor the MacIvors who inherited it had ever been that fecund, and some of the family suites had become guest chambers.

"I can't wait to show you the nursery," I said, as we approached it.

"The . . . nursery?" he repeated, looking a little startled.

Meeting his eyes, I laughed and blushed, "Not for that reason, silly. I grew up in the nursery. It's huge and there's a lovely old fireplace with tiles all around it illustrating 'Pilgrim's Progress.' Just think, the Clinton and the MacIvor children have been warmed at that fire for over a hundred and eighty years! There's some of the original furniture left. When Barbary Clinton was small, she scratched

her name on one of the panes of glass with a little ring her Grandfather Crowne had given her."

He stopped the car a few yards from the house and as we started walking toward it, I began thinking about Aunt Maude again. I was not sure why. Since I had been accepted at Elkston, her baneful influence had waned, but now my old fears of her were stirring again. I was amazed by them, but much as I tried to persuade myself I was being foolish, I was actually praying that she would not be there.

With the prescience he had been demonstrating ever since we had met, Dario said, "Why are you so frightened, love?"

"It's Aunt Maude." I whispered.

He laughed, "Surely all her claws are drawn by now."

"I . . . don't know," I sighed. "There's something I . . . I can't explain, but . . ."

He gave me a quick kiss on the cheek and taking my hand, he said gaily, "Come along, darling, it's lion-bearding time."

"As long as it's not lion-feeding time," I groaned.

He laughed, but when he saw that the knocker on our front door was in the shape of a lion's head, he let it fall with an extra loud clang. However, in spite of his little show of defiance, we instinctively drew close together as we waited for his summons to be acknowledged. Despite our deep conviction that what we had done was absolutely right, there was still the matter of impressing it on my parents and Dario, being sensitive, was also edgy.

Jenkins, our butler, opened the door and at his look of surprise, I realized that I had not used my key. I had actually forgotten about it. I strove for a casual air. "Jenkins," I said, "this is Mr. Paull. Where are my parents?"

Jenkins was tall, English and dignified; he had never looked more dignified as he intoned, "In the library, Miss." I saw his pale eyes rest on Dario and I could

almost read the word "foreigner" in them. It did not make me any easier in my mind. However, I said lightly, casually, "Come, darling." Over my shoulder, I added, "You needn't trouble to announce us, Jenkins."

We went down the long hall with its shining parquet floors and its pale ivory walls. "It's a lovely house," Dario said, looking appreciatively at the moulded ceilings.

"Yes," I agreed, "but I shan't be sorry to leave it." Then, I had a feeling of cold terror, as I suddenly saw myself old, very old, and still here. Everything was behind me, the audiences, the applause, the many cities in which I had performed and I was alone in my room, terribly alone, with no one in the household aware of the agonies I had suffered, still suffered, when there was no music to take me out of myself. I tried to pretend that this vision of the future was ridiculous and morbid, but I was not quite successful. It was too vivid a vision! What if Dario were suddenly to leave me? I wondered what had put that thought into my mind? There was no question of his leaving. Yet I tightened my hold on his arm, causing him to look down at me with a lovely, understanding smile.

"Don't be nervous, darling."

"No, I'm not." Then, we were at the library door and I was extremely nervous. I pulled open the door. A huge room, three of the walls are lined with books and there are additional shelves ranging through its center. Near windows opening onto the gardens, stood couches, chairs and a long table which, in those days, was nearly always piled high with the newspapers and magazines which my father ordered from all over the world, he being, as I do not think I have mentioned, the head of a small publishing firm called the Charles Press.

As I came in, I saw my parents and Aunt Maude sitting on one of the couches deep in conversation. Swallowing a large lump in my throat, I went toward them quickly, but Dario remained just inside the door. "M—Mother, D—Daddy," I began tentatively. "This is Dario Paull, he

...'' Then my words were lost, cut off by the loud cry that issued from my Aunt Maude, who, rising to her feet, took a few steps in our direction, staring at Dario.

''You!'' she screamed. ''You . . . you've come back,'' then she took another step forward and fell in a heap on the floor.

Everyone ran to help her, but Dario reached her first. Just as he bent over her, she regained consciousness, looking very pale and blue about the lips. He helped her up, putting an arm around her solicitously. ''Are you all right?'' he asked.

She clung to him for a second, then she quickly backed away. ''Y-yes, please . . . forgive me,'' she said in a shaken voice. ''It . . . was the shock of . . . of . . . seeing someone who looks a great deal like a . . . a man, I once knew. He . . . he's dead now.''

It was an amazing admission. I was sure my parents were just as taken aback as I, myself, for Aunt Maude had never mentioned any man. Had there been a love affair, long ago? It did not matter and, at the time, I was actually grateful for the diversion she had created. It helped to dull the impact of our unexpected arrival. Later, it made my parents doubly hospitable to Dario, in the hopes of assuaging the effect of Aunt Maude's inexplicable behavior. Much to my relief, she soon left the room and she did not reappear downstairs that evening.

Naturally, my parents were stunned at the suddenness of our decision to marry. It would have been easier had we been able to tell them that we had known each other in a past life, but that would have involved explanations neither of us was equipped to provide. Furthermore, those insubstantial fragments were proving secondary to our current involvement, which seemed to gain strength with every passing glance, every chancy touch. It must have been almost as obvious to my parents as it was to us, for we had less trouble than we had anticipated in showing them that we were not to be dissuaded from our plans.

Of course, the main question in their minds was my music. "After all these years and on the very threshold of a career, you are going to abandon the whole idea?" my father demanded incredulously. I could see that he was also disappointed.

"No," Dario answered for me. "I would never let her do that."

"No," I agreed. "I couldn't think of giving up my music."

"You can study in New York," Dario said.

"But what about Martinelli?" I asked.

I thought I detected a shade of regret in his tone, as he shrugged, "There are teachers in New York who are just as good and not so temperamental or . . . possibly, we might even go back to Elkston for a semester, but we needn't worry about that now."

"But there are matters which must concern you," my father said, "matters such as money." I expect he thought he was coining a phrase when he averred, "You can't live on love." Before Dario could answer, he added, "You intend to pursue your own musical career, I take it."

"He must!" I cried.

"I do," Dario smiled at me, "but I am well able to support Lorrie, sir. My paternal grandfather was one of the chief stockholders in the Newton Railroad and my father invested in Pacific-Aire."

"I see . . ." My father looked extremely relieved. "That's an odd background for a violinist."

"I used to think so, myself," Dario said enigmatically.

"You never know where musical talent comes from," my mother said earnestly. "Barbary Clinton was the first in her family to show any ability."

"You never know," I smiled at Dario and was warmed by our secret understanding.

We retired early that night. Dario and I were tired from our long drive, but even in the relatively short period of

our long drive, but even in the relatively short period of time we spent with them, I could see that my parents' disapproval had largely evaporated. They were impressed by Dario's charm and it was obvious that he was well-bred and from an excellent family. I was so happy. I felt as though I had strayed into the ever-after paragraph of a fairy tale. Yet, when I bade Dario goodnight in the upstairs hall, I was very reluctant to part from him—reluctant and oddly frightened. I wished that we could have shared a single chamber, but naturally that was not possible. He had been given a guest room in the middle of the hall and I was in my own room. My parents had tactfully left us alone to say good night and because we were so needful, we had to content ourselves with a pair of quick kisses, otherwise we could not have separated.

I had always loved my room. It had high ceilings and a large adjoining bathroom. There was a small fireplace directly across from my canopied bed; there were tall windows on either side of the fireplace and two more in the wall to the left of my bed. Both of these had window seats, covered with flowered chintz cushions to match the drapes and the hangings over my bed. Rag rugs were on the floor and the furniture was, for the most part, Victorian. The effect was charming, but as I entered it that night, I hated it, resenting its echoing emptiness, resenting the fact that he was four doors removed from me.

"Damn convention," I muttered petulantly and tried to think about New York and his apartment, where we would be together again. I was not successful.

I caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror over my dressing table as I was about to slip between my lavender-scented sheets. I was wearing a discreet white nightgown and my hair hung in two long braids. I looked as I had always looked, but how very differently I felt with my body alive with desire for his caresses, for his invasion and

possession. I did not think I would sleep, but, at last, in self-defense, I did.

My dreams were odd and fragmented. I think they were also frightening, then, suddenly I was awake and aware of an unfamiliar noise outside my windows. A car, close to the house, was starting up. I leaped from my bed and ran to the window, staring down into the moon-bathed grounds. Then, I saw a little convertible heading up the driveway. It took a second more for me to realize that it was Dario's car!

Dario was leaving! Leaving in the middle of the night? I could hardly believe it. I thought I must still be dreaming, but I had seen and heard the car. I rushed out of my room and down the hall. The door to his chamber stood open. I ran inside. His bed was empty. I pulled open the closet. His coat was gone. Switching on a light, I looked for a note, but there was nothing. If his bed had not been rumpled, I should have said it had never been occupied. I sank down on it and lay there, too stunned to weep, too stunned even to wonder where he had gone. "Why, why, why?" I moaned.

"Lora," someone whispered and there was a hand on my shoulder. For a second, I had a wild surge of hope that he had come back, but only for a second for on lifting my head, I found Aunt Maude, clad in a long dark robe, standing over me.

"What do you want?" I moaned.

"I expect you'd like to know what happened to Mr. Paull," she said coldly. "He won't be back."

I sprang up and she stepped backwards. "What do you mean? What are you saying?" I grabbed her by the shoulders, shaking her furiously.

She wrenched herself out of my frenzied grasp. "When you learn the truth, you'll be glad he's gone. You'll realize what a narrow escape you had."

"What . . . what are you talking about?"

"I am saying that Dario Paull's not what he seems. I am saying that he is evil."

"Evil . . . you're mad!"

"Listen to me, Lora," she commanded. "You must be warned about this . . . this creature, who has come back out of the past for your soul, just as once he came for the soul of Barbary Clinton, whom he killed."

"B—B—Barbary C—Clinton . . ." I shrank away from her. "She—she's been d—dead for—for twenty-six years. Dario's only t—twenty—four," I gasped, and then I wondered why I was even answering this crazy woman. "Where is he? What did you say to him?" I cried.

"I hardly needed to say anything to him, after I let him read this." Reaching into her pocket, she brought up a little leather-covered diary. "He knew he was found out. He knew he had to leave."

I was hardly listening, I was staring at the book. Angri-ly, I demanded, "Where did you find my diary . . ." A second later I was totally confused, since my own diary, covered in blue leather, was in my suitcase and the one she was holding toward me was red.

She looked at me strangely. "It's not yours and it's not a diary. It used to be the property of Barbary Clinton. She gave it to me a few days before she was killed."

"Why do you keep saying she was killed?" I cried. "She died a natural death."

"No," she contradicted sharply, "I was there. I saw him. He killed her."

In spite of my agony over Dario, I could not help wondering if she were about to tell me what had taken place on that night. Did I want to know why she had broken her engagement and what had turned a lovely young girl into a vindictive, embittered woman? A mad woman? The thought flashed through my mind and was gone. None of that mattered—what mattered was Dario's inexplicable departure. No, not inexplicable, for Aunt Maude had said something to him. But what?

"I want to know about Dario!" I sobbed.

She opened the book and took out two small pictures. "One of these is your Aunt Barbary, whom you know you resemble. The other is a likeness of the man she loved, the man who destroyed her and who has come back to destroy you."

"I . . . I don't want to—to see it. You're crazy. What crazy thing did you tell him to . . . to make him go away? I hate you," I babbled.

"Look at it," she thrust the picture at me.

It was the tintype of a young man in Victorian dress, but when I saw his face, I felt the floor heave beneath me. It was Dario! "I . . . I don't understand," I whispered.

She put the book into my hand. "Read," she ordered. "Read it, Lora, as you value your life and your immortal soul." She walked out of the room.

I stared at the picture and the diary. My heart was in my throat. I did not want to read it and yet I knew I must. Taking it, I went back to my own room. Crawling into bed, I opened the diary and glanced at the first page. It was covered with the fine, spidery handwriting of the period. It was astonishingly clear; I could understand every word.

It began, "I, Barbary Clinton, begin this account in the interest of preserving my sanity. No, that is not true. I am sane . . ." I closed the book. Suddenly, I was afraid to read any more.

Slipping out of bed, I went to the window and looked down into the grounds. Where had he gone? The picture . . . had she shown him the picture? She had let him read the diary; I had to know what he had read for it must have been that which had sent him out of the house without a word to me! I went back to bed and propped myself up against my pillows, again. I opened the book—and then, the other picture dropped out. It was a likeness of Barbary Clinton—of which there were many in the house, but none like this one. She looked much younger, here, younger,

happier, and very familiar. With a shock, I realized that she looked just like the image I found in my mirror every day. I put the two pictures side by side. Were it not for the old-fashioned clothes and photography, I could have been viewing Lorrie MacIvor and Dario Paull!

My heart was thumping as I began to read again. I am including the account in my own story, as she wrote it and as I, inexplicably, no, not inexplicably, was able to flesh it out by calling upon my own memory.

PART TWO

Barbary



I, BARBARY CLINTON, begin this account in the interest of preserving my sanity. No, that is not true. I am sane. I am writing about these events because I do not want to forget even one of them, and because I hope that those who pass after me will be warned about the evil that still walks among us, yes, even in these days, when the thinking men who follow the teachings of Darwin and Huxley do not want to credit the rank superstitions which have held the human mind in bondage for so many centuries. Yet, there is something to be said for superstition, mythology and much else that we might call unworthy of the enlightened mind.

In writing this, I shall leave out no pertinent detail for I believe it important that those who read it know me and my circumstances, the mundane as well as the unusual. It will aid them to see how easily one may be drawn into an abyss without even being aware of the cliff-edge that overhangs it.

I think my maternal grandfather, Captain Abel Crowne, had some inkling of my eventual experiences, for when I was very little, my mother brought him to my cradle. He bent over me and I, reaching up, caught his finger, holding it tightly and refusing to let go.

"Ah," he laughed, "your little Barbara's not a Barbara at all, she's a Barbary pirate who's stolen my finger."

I am told that I gurgled delightedly at his sally, quite as though I had understood it. He said, "Ah, what bright eyes she has . . . she's avid for life, aren't you, baby Barbary? She'll have some very unusual experiences, I think, for she craves excitement."

My mother was fond of quoting her father's words to me, but she did it with a deprecating smile and she always added, "Your greatest excitement will come when you fall in love and marry a good man like your papa. That is the most excitement any woman can expect from this life, my dear."

In those days, I agreed with her, even though I privately wished that I could marry a man who would share my passion for music. I had been very young when I had demonstrated an aptitude for the pianoforte, which my parents had happily encouraged. In that period, every young girl in my circumstances was almost required to have a smattering of artistic skills such as embroidery, needlepoint, painting china, or sketching. Singing and playing the piano or the harp were equally important. However, I might add that my artistry stopped with the piano. If I did embroidery or needlepoint, I pricked my fingers. My china painting was terrible; the colors ran and the flowers looked like cabbages. My watercolors were equally inept and I could not carry a tune, but once I touched the piano keys, I was transported into another world. I could play all day. I was particularly enamoured of Liszt and even though my parents frowned on his morals, they were kind enough to let me buy each one of his works as soon as it was published. Of course, that was when I was older.

I shall not dwell upon my childhood. Aside from my music, it was not much different from that of any other girl in our circle. My father was a prosperous landowner, who spent much of his time improving his holdings. My mother presided over Clinton House, our family mansion, entertaining his friends and her own. My sister Judith and I studied with our governess, Mrs. Meacham, in the mornings and went for walks in the afternoon. In our free time we were allowed to play with children from the neighboring estates. My sister and I were on reasonably good terms, even though she could never understand my love for music, and she was often cross because I preferred to

stay indoors and practice rather than join her at games.

Looking back on those days, I remember that I used to sit and watch the clock in the nursery, thinking that the time would never pass. And then, before I knew it, minutes, hours, days, and weeks passed with incredible speed and Judy's curls were off her back and hanging about her face in carefully-arranged ringlets. Her skirts were draped over wide crinolines and, instead of running or jumping, she took small steps attempting to glide rather than walk. It was a movement she never did master, though she practiced it for hours in front of the tall glass in her bedroom, glaring at me when I giggled and telling me that I was a nasty child.

"I'm only two years younger than you," I would retort, widening the gulf between us by sticking out my tongue at her. I wasn't only being "naughty," as she termed it; it was my way of trying to get a rise out of her. I hoped she would make a face at me, or yell, or do something to prove she was not as grownup as she clearly wanted to be. I felt lonely without her.

Sometimes, however, she did seem more like the old Judy. Those were the nights when she came into my room and crawled in bed with me to whisper secrets, just as she had always done when we were little. In those days, she told me about finding flint arrowheads on the old Indian trails back of our house; she had a wonderful collection of nearly perfect heads. But she had stopped bragging about them and, instead, she spoke about Will MacIvor, who used to go arrow-hunting and horseback riding with us. He had red hair, freckles, and a long straight nose. He hurt his nose the summer he fell out of our apple tree. By hurting himself he was spared a scolding. He had no business in our tree. I remember James, one of our footmen, carrying him into the house. Judy and I were afraid he had been killed, especially when we saw the big black plaster on his forehead and the other one across his nose.

I am digressing. It is easy to digress. There is so much

that I want to write and so much that I don't, but must. I will get back to Judy. In a sense, she was indirectly responsible for everything that happened to me. I suppose, I could blame it on Will, for he precipitated matters by deciding to go off to war. That was one of the secrets Judy confided to me when she climbed into bed. She told it to me between sobs and outbursts of anger.

"He's horrid . . . he could send a substitute. Any one of his father's servants could go. It can easily be arranged, but he thinks it's his duty to fight for his country. He . . . he heard Mr. Lincoln speak once and he . . . he thinks he's like Christ, that's what he told Papa. He thinks every able-bodied Northerner should shoulder arms."

Naturally, though I was only fifteen, it remained for me to fall in love with a soldier, too, and I did. Brian Grey, Will's best friend, was my choice. As a child, I had ridden horseback with him, gone sledding and, incidentally, quarreled fiercely, because he was a tease. Once he had pushed me in the water and laughed when all the colors of my new dress ran together.

He had been a short, pudgy little boy with a round face and big round eyes. Suddenly, he was much taller and slimmer. His face had unaccountably lengthened and his eyes, once so full of mischief, were sober, especially on the day he led me into the summer house at the back of our gardens and, falling on his knees, asked me to wait for him, adding that he had always held me in the very greatest esteem.

"But you haven't, Brian," I contradicted. "Only last year, you were always pulling my hair and . . ."

"Hush," he said sharply, "you're not supposed to remember such things. They happened when we were children."

"Last year, Brain, you were seventeen and I was fourteen. Now we are fifteen and eighteen. Does that make so great a difference?"

He had an intent look in his eyes, one I had never seen

before and which made me feel vaguely uneasy. "Doesn't it to you?" he demanded in his husky voice, while I wondered why I hadn't noticed the change in his voice or any of the other changes which were so apparent to me now. I was experiencing odd pulses in even odder places. Their locations surprised me and made me blush. He repeated his question in a low voice. "Doesn't it make a difference to you, Barbary?"

Before I knew it the answer had popped out of me, "Yes," I said. "Yes, it does, Brian."

Brian gave me my first kiss and all the throbbings increased. Yet, as we embraced my head was still crammed with the images of our recent childhood—how we had played Indian together, how we had climbed to the hayloft in our stables and wrestled, and how we had laughed at Judy, grown so stiff and ladylike or, as Brian phrased it, "soppy and solemn." Would I also become soppy and solemn and take small steps when I wanted to run and jump? I was both regretful and excited. Brian's cheek was cool against mine, but his lips were warm. Of course, we shouldn't have been kissing because it was utterly lacking in all propriety, but these were different times, perilous times because Brian, in common with Will MacIvor, held a lieutenant's commission in the United States Army.

How handsome he looked in his uniform! His hair was the same ruddy, gold color as his epaulettes and his blue eyes were only a few shades lighter than his garb. By the time he had received his orders, I had become just like Judy, or almost. I took small steps, when I remembered to do so, and I floated down the halls at home in my crinolines. I also bought little flags to wave as the soldiers marched through our town. Then there came a day when I was sitting in the summerhouse with Brian again, kissing him goodbye, promising to write, saying once more that I would wait and feeling all tingly and even a little wicked because his kiss had been so different this time.

Now, as I recall that period in my life, it seems as

though it happened to someone else. So much has occurred since then. So much that is strange, and unsettling, and beautiful, and terrible. It is easier for me to think about Brian as a child rather than as the man he became, the man I had planned to marry.

During his absence, I followed the example of my mother, Judy, and all the other women of the town. I joined a circle dedicated to knitting mufflers and stockings for the boys at the front. However, as usual, I was unsuccessful and eventually I had to content myself with rolling bandages. In my free time, I continued to practice my music and I also wrote long letters to Brian, who wrote back from a number of places. His letters were bright and cheerful. From their content, you might have thought he was merely traveling for pleasure. I really loved those letters with their descriptions of the countryside and of some of the people he met. I always answered them as quickly as I could.

One afternoon, I was just finishing a letter to him, when Matilda, our parlor maid, told me that Brian's mother had come to see me. I found her in the drawing room, sitting opposite my own mother, who was looking very grave. Mrs. Grey rose as soon as I entered and hurrying to me, she put her arms around me, tremulously uttering the words that without telling me anything, told me everything. "Barbary, dearest Barbary, I did so want you to be my daughter."

I remember looking at her incredulously. "Brian?" I asked numbly.

"Gettysburg," she said. "We've been told that he fought very . . . bravely. Oh, my dear, I am so sorry."

I nodded and I kissed her wet cheek. "I see," I said and found myself unable to say anything more. I could only kiss her again and hold her for a moment, before I went back up the stairs to my room.

Later, lying on my bed with a cloth soaked in witch hazel on my brow which Mama or Judy had placed there, I tried

to understand that Brian, my old playmate, the little round boy who had teased me into tears as a child, was not coming back. It seemed so incredible, especially since I was wearing his engagement ring.

"But we were to be married," I whispered into the silence. "And now . . . what's going to happen?"

I felt lost and confused. He had filled my thoughts for such a long time. We had made plans, too. He had wanted to breed horses. He had talked about buying a farm. "But there'll be a music room for you, Barbary, and the very best piano I can buy," he had emphasized. On the day before he had gone off to war, he had asked me to play "Beautiful Dreamer." It had been one of his favorites.

"Play it for me now, Barbary," I heard him whisper and could not tell whether it was in or out of my head. Still, I nodded and went down to my piano.

Just as I reached the end of the selection, the door was jerked open and Judy, her eyes red with weeping, stood on the threshold glaring at me. "You've no heart, Barbary, no heart!" she shrilled. "Brian's d—dead and you . . . you're playing the p—piano!"

I whirled around on my stool. "I am playing for Brian!" I cried, and the tears came into my eyes. Brimming over, they rolled down my cheeks. "He . . . he wanted me to play." Then, I grew cold, for out of the corner of my eye, I could actually see him. He was standing near the piano, staring down at me, looking exactly as he had on the day we had parted except that his sleeve hung empty at his side. He gave me a reassuring smile, a warm intimate smile which I returned. "Brian," I mouthed.

"Goodbye, Barbary," I seemed to hear him say and then he flickered like an image on a rock-disturbed pool and disappeared.

"Why're . . . you . . . smiling?" Judy gasped. She repeated, "You have no heart." She slammed the door and I went on playing the piano. I felt soothed and comforted. I also felt positive that Brian had come to say farewell. I

was sure of it when I learned that his arm had been sheared off by the bayonet of the soldier who killed him.

I have written about Brian to show that up until the age of eighteen, I had lived a normal life, fully expecting that when Brian came home, I would settle down, have babies and "Live happily ever after," as it was decreed in the fairy tales I had always loved to read. Brian's death changed that. I had lost more than a lover, and a husband-to-be, I had lost a friend. After that first day, my grief came in spurts. At times, I wept for the boy in the stable-loft and at other times for the man, whose tentative caresses had excited me. However, it was for my old playmate that I grieved the most. I had barely had time to know the man he became. Still, I could not become interested in anyone else. Though I attended the balls given in honor of "our boys in blue," and never wanted for partners among the young lieutenants and majors home on leave, I paid little attention to their compliments and never gave them a chance to make me an offer, though I imagine that several might have, if I had been more encouraging. Mama was annoyed with me.

One day she came to me in the music room, where I was working on a new Liszt transcription of "The Pilgrim's Chorus," from *Tannhauser*. She was wearing a purple bombazine gown cut more severely than most of her garments. It suited her mood which was also more severe than it had been in the eighteen months since Brian was killed.

"Barbary," she said sharply, closing the door behind her with a little bang, "Stop practicing. I want to talk to you—and why you must play the works of that disreputable Hungarian and that dreadful little German man, I shall never know. To my ears, it is sheer cacophony."

"Every ear forms its own beauty, Mama," I said, a little smugly, perhaps, because I felt that as a member of the older generation, she lacked my insight into modern

music. "Wagner," I began, "is a formidable composer. One day . . ."

"Never mind Wagner." She rustled forward and came to a stop in the middle of the room, frowning at me. "You make a very pretty picture at the piano, Barbary. You are quite lovely, you know."

Her words were certainly not in keeping with her expression. They surprised me a great deal for she was never very free with her compliments. "Thank you, Mama," I said.

"I am not complimenting you," she snapped. "I am pointing out a fact. You are a very pretty girl, but good looks don't last forever . . . and neither does grief, I might add. It's time you stopped thinking about the past and concentrated on your future. Youth doesn't last forever, either. There are girls growing up all around you and there'll be a shortage of eligible men. You . . . you might even be an old maid, if you don't alter your way of thinking and behaving."

"Probably, I shall be," I replied, undismayed by that particular horror.

Mama was shocked. "Have you any idea what it would be like, not being married?" she demanded. "You wouldn't have a home of your own or babies—nothing that a normal woman needs to round out her life. You'd be alone," she paused, obviously searching for the most telling and ominous comparison. "It would be as if you were out in a heavy snowstorm looking through a lighted window and seeing a family warming itself at the fire, oblivious of your terror and your cold." She shuddered. "You would feel very cold indeed, Barbary."

That particular description did chill me, especially as I realized it might be very accurate. However, I said staunchly and stubbornly, "I can never love anyone again."

"Fudge," Mama said tartly. "Do you know, Barbary, I don't think you were ever really in love with Brian."

"Mama!" I gasped, clasping my hands together, "he was my whole life."

"He was nothing of the sort," she retorted. "He was in the nature of . . . the measles or . . . or croup or any other disease."

"D—Disease!" I stuttered.

She nodded, "A disease only too prevalent in time of war, when the me-too fever seizes young women. You caught it from your sister and I think you should examine your feelings more closely. Did you become engaged to Brian because you loved him or because you felt you ought to love him since he was going off to war?"

I looked at her incredulously, seeing not Mama in that instant but the shade of Brian. He had stood by my piano in the very same place Mama was now standing. If I had not loved him, would he have come from the grave to bid me farewell? Of course, I loved him—passionately. "I loved him passionately, Mama," I told her.

She emitted a sharp, short sigh. "I don't think you've any inkling of what passion means, Barbary. Brian certainly never could have taught you, though he was a dear little boy."

"He was a man when he went to war," I said coldly.

"He was eighteen, far too young to be cannon-fodder. I never approved of it. He caught the me-too fever from Will, I expect. No matter, I tell you that you are deluding yourself. You are clinging to an idea rather than to a lost lover. There will come a time when 'Brian' will only be a name like the names of other friends you once knew."

"Never," I intoned, adding dramatically, "quoth the raven, nevermore!"

"Poe!" Mama sniffed, glaring at me. "I fear for you, Barbary, I really do—with your unfortunate penchant for the disreputable and the drunken. Sometimes, I feel it would've been better if we'd never let you near a piano." On that obscure comment, she sailed out of the room, leaving me caught between anger and tears. I did not see

how she could have been so lacking in all understanding for my broken heart. Brian had been and always would be the one love of my life. I would remain constant to his memory until the grass grew green on my grave or, at least, until I died. Returning to my practicing, I played Chopin's Funeral March loudly, hoping that she would hear and understand.

The war ended. The men came home. Will MacIvor returned in June of 1865, looking bronzed, fit, and a full twenty years older, if you went by the expression in his disillusioned eyes. He had been stationed in Washington and on April 14th, he had gone to Ford's Theatre because he knew that Abraham Lincoln, the man he still revered above all others, would be there at a performance of *Our American Cousin*.

He had heard the shot and seen the man with the dragging leg hastily hobbling through the house. "I was so close to him, I could have stopped him, if I'd known what was happening," he said, adding darkly, "I will never set foot in another theater again. I never wish to see another actor."

I soon found out that he had developed a similar hatred for all the performing arts, including music. Judy begged me not to play the piano when he was visiting her. Consequently, I was both pleased and relieved when they decided to get married in August.

It was a beautiful wedding. It took place in our drawing room, decorated for the occasion in white and filled with weeping guests. The Reverend Nigel Ordway, the minister from the First Episcopal Church, presided. He was a sweet old man and had baptized both Judy and me. He cried, too, saying that he remembered us both as babies. Just before the ceremony started, Judy, who was also in tears, pressed my hand, saying soulfully that it was a pity Brian could not be there. I nodded solemnly, wishing that he could be, because I knew that he, alone among all the

assembled people, would have agreed with me that it was a very soppy occasion.

I felt a little more sentimental when I saw how handsome Will looked in his uniform. Judy made an exquisite bride. She wore a new gown of white lace, being too slight and small to fit into Mama's wedding dress. She did wear the veil and she carried a bouquet of gardenias. As her maid-of-honor, I, too, was in white—a lovely gown over a full crinoline. I took small steps and Captain Orville Newton, who was Will's best man, told me that I looked as if I were dressed in clouds. He described me as floating down the aisle.

Orville Newton was attracted to me. Mama knew it before I did and she was very gracious to him, and Papa was too. They liked him, as they lost no opportunity of telling me. Indeed, they told me so often that I grew tired of hearing it. I was not attracted to Captain Newton. He was a husky, loud-voiced man, who laughed too much and I was most annoyed when he began to pay regular visits to our house. I had not forgotten Brian—indeed my conversation with Mama had only strengthened my decision to love him forever! Certainly Captain Newton's attentions did not help me to change my mind. He was clumsy and importunate. He had a habit of standing too close to me and squeezing my arm. I did not mind the latter as much as the former for his breath was sour and often there was an odor about him, a staleness, that revolted me. Consequently, I was very glad when he brought matters between us to a head, and to an end, by falling upon me in that summer-house, rendered holy in my estimation because Brian had proposed to me there. Orville, having confessed to equally honorable intentions, did not wait for the negative that was forming in my mouth. He pulled me to him, kissing me in a way that frightened and revolted me.

Gagging and coughing from the feel of his tongue inside my mouth, I struggled to be free of him. "Let me go, let me go," I panted, when I could speak again.

He did not comply. He was breathing deeply. His face was a dark ugly red and his arms were like two iron bars about me. "Lil' Barby," he muttered. "L'il Barby, love you." As he started to push me backward against the latticed wall, I was suddenly reminded of a trick Brian used to pull when he was little. Easing up the wall, he would hang on a high lattice, kicking his feet out in front of him.

With a great effort, I wrenched myself free of Captain Newton's grip and reaching upward, I grabbed a lattice above my head. Unmindful of my skirts, I used it as a brace and raising myself up quickly, I kicked out, hitting him on the chest with both feet, knocking him backward against the far side of the summerhouse. Before he could do more than look utterly astonished, I dashed out and ran across the garden to the morning room, where Mama was placidly sewing. Seeing me, she looked horrified. My gown was torn and my hair disheveled, but I imagine it was the distraught look on my face that upset her the most. "Barbary, love," she cried, putting her arms around me. "Come, you must lie down." She glared out the window. "Your Papa will deal with Captain Newton."

I did not see the amorous captain again. He left town. Will MacIvor, embarrassed and practically tongue-tied, excused him on the grounds that his years of service had caused him to be too eager to make up for lost time with the ladies.

I had read of the Rebels molesting innocent women and Newton's behavior gave me cause to believe that the depredations had not been entirely one-sided.

After that experience, Mama and Papa ceased prodding me toward marriage and I, freed from the pressure, did pretty much as I liked, which meant I spent a great deal of time at my piano. In addition to Liszt. I was playing Schumann. I learned "Papillons" and the "Davidsbundlertanze Sonatas." I was also working on a "Variations on a Theme of

Schumann" by his young friend, Johannes Brahms. In addition, I was inventing my own variations to a rondo by Hummel. I was playing very well. I was passionately involved with my music and gradually, I was gaining a reputation as a fine pianist. Friends asked me to dinner parties mainly in the hope that I would play for them afterward. Occasionally, I was bidden to be the main performer in an evening "musicale." I told myself that I was very happy, very contented even though I was close to twenty-three and gave every indication of being an "old maid." I told myself that I should not have minded if my life continued in that same pattern as long as it lasted. Of course, I was lying to myself; of course, I was restless and unsatisfied and wishing that something would jolt me out of my rut. That something was much nearer than I imagined.

I have said that my sister was inadvertently responsible for the change in my life, but it was my music that exposed me to the danger that nearly ended my existence. And now, as I approach the real reason I decided to write this account, I admit that I am afraid to set it down. But I must, I must! I feel that it is necessary. Indeed, I feel that I am recording my experience for someone who is, as yet, unborn, but whom I know. How can I explain this illusion or delusion? I do not understand it. Perhaps I am not supposed to understand. It is so confusing. But I have promised myself that I will write it.

The night that changed my life started as had many others, with an invitation to a dinner party at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Lang, a wealthy young couple who were friends of Judy and Will. I went there in the company of my sister and brother-in-law and as I sat across from them in their carriage, their serene happiness was a barrier to conversation and a forcible reminder of Mama's reference to "lighted windows."

Judy was expecting her first child, and even though the

initial four months had been difficult for her, she was glowing and she looked beautiful. Beside her, I felt drab and drained. I was very restless that evening. I think she sensed it, for she came out of her cocoon to remark, "That's a very pretty gown, Barbary. So stylish with that bustle, and I love the shade of pink. It's so flattering to your complexion. Don't you think so, Will?"

"Um . . . yes," he mumbled, smiling at her.

"Thank you." I produced a gratified smile, but I did not appreciate her compliment. It seemed to me that she was implying that I, at twenty-two, needed the artificial stimulus of the bright color to light my fading complexion. As if, indeed, I were already withering on the vine. I, on the other hand, felt as young as I had at eighteen. However, I had to admit that the expectancy with which I had once greeted every party or ball had vanished. I had learned that the seeds of adventure were not implicit in every invitation. Undoubtedly, the evening at the Langs would be like any other evening. Most of my friends were married. Some, like Emily Colfax, for instance, were the mothers of growing families—three babies in the short space of twenty-eight months, and Emily, grown thin and peevish, was drained of the prettiness she had possessed when she had married Jeremy Colfax. That was one lighted window to which I did not seek admittance even though I knew that Emily and all my other friends pitied me and were anxious to see me "settled." Generally, at these parties I would meet some man, single, and, according to my hosts, "eligible." However, their definition of "eligible" always differed strongly from mine and often from that of the man in question, who might be pining for the maiden he had left in Boston or New York, as two love-lorn bachelors told me on two separate occasions. Others had been attentive enough to me. But they did not erase the image of Brian, or obviate the terror I had experienced when Orville Newton assaulted me in the summerhouse. Mama was beginning to despair of me and I was beginning

to despair of myself. On this particular evening, I clutched the music roll in my lap and expected nothing, wanted nothing, and, indeed, looked forward to the moment when the coach would be turned in the other direction and I was allowed to go home.

The Langs lived in a house that had been built at the beginning of the eighteenth century, 1710 to be exact. It was a tall, four-story, wooden building with large windows facing the street and a row of small dormer windows in the roof. It was surrounded by an iron fence and back of it stretched a wide yard filled with spring flowers. Mrs. Lang was an enthusiastic gardener.

More flowers hung in pots and were set in vases through the dining hall. It was a lovely dinner, but in my estimation, it lasted far too long and had far too many courses, especially for me, who had a small appetite. The conversation was mainly about politics, which held no interest for me. For once, however, I was not seated next to an eligible bachelor. On one side of me was a youth of eighteen and on the other was Arthur Parry, an elderly friend of Mrs. Lang's father. A retired judge, he talked to me about hospitals in which he had a particular interest. It was his opinion that they ought to be staffed with female nurses and I had the distinct impression that he was hinting that I should apply for such a position. In a sense, I would have preferred the bachelor, for Judge Parry's presence suggested to me that my hostess had mentally placed me on a shelf. It was a supposition I resented, since I did not agree with it. "Not yet, not yet," I muttered to myself, a little desperately, feeling the coffin-lid about to close on me. For a moment, I actively resented Brian for having been killed and leaving me to this waste of a life.

It was then that I looked into the eyes of a woman sitting across from me and found them fixed on me. A shiver went through me. Her stare reminded me of a cat at a mouse-hole, a cat that has just seen his prey about to

emerge. Yet, a moment later, the sensation passed. The predatory look had faded from her eyes if, indeed, it had ever been there, and she was smiling at me. At the same time, I saw that she was quite lovely, though a trifle haggard. There was an air of unhappiness about her. Probably she had lost someone dear to her in the recent conflict. Then I remembered that I had been introduced to her; she was a distant cousin by marriage of Nicholas Lang. Her name was Mrs. Weir. She was a widow and she lived outside of Salem. She appeared to be very wealthy. She was wearing a beautiful gown, which breathed Paris and the fine hand of Worth. Her jewelry consisted of a diamond and emerald necklace, several diamond rings, and an enamel, sapphire and diamond snake bracelet.

"Miss Clinton . . ."

"Yes, Judge." I turned back to him and forgot about Mrs. Weir.

After dinner, the ladies, led by Mrs. Lang, adjourned to the music room and, of course, she asked me to play. I had expected to perform Liszt's "Dream of Love," but at the last moment, some perverse imp caused me to substitute his "Etudes d'Execution Transcendante." In rapid succession, I played four of the pieces: "Preludio," "Mazeppa," "Eroica" and "Harmonies du Soir."

I am not sure that my contribution was greatly approved, for it was a virtuoso and difficult piece and I think my listeners would have preferred something less compelling. However, the applause was loud and I was asked to give them another selection. I refused and sat down, probably much to the relief of the other ladies, who wanted to talk rather than listen. I did not. The music had stimulated me and leaving the piano had returned me to the drab world where I must needs hear about teething babies and willful servants, subjects which bored me to distraction!

"You know, of course, that you are entirely wasted here," a voice with a foreign intonation observed.

Startled, I looked up into the intense dark eyes of Mrs. Weir. "I . . . beg your pardon?"

"We should beg yours," she answered with a contemptuous wave of her arm toward the other oblivious ladies. "You should be playing where many might listen. Twenty-five years ago, I heard Clara Schumann play in Hamburg." She laughed. "Under her fingers, the keys fell from the piano. You leave the keys intact, but your hands are just as powerful and your touch, exquisite. I would like it if you could come to my home and play for me. There are those whom I would bring to hear you and then, who can tell what might happen?"

"W—What might—h—happen?" I repeated, incredulously.

"You have great talent, my dear. You've no right to keep it buried here. You should . . . you must share it with the world."

"Oh, but . . . but . . ." I didn't know what to say. Such a possibility had never occurred to me.

"I see you've never thought of such a step," she commented, quite as if she had read my mind. She raised thin eyebrows. "But there are many women who perform in public concerts and you should certainly be of their number. Might I speak to your mother, my dear? Might I tell her what she—or rather you, must do?"

I could scarcely believe her, but I had to believe her, she was so insistent, too insistent, too pressing. "I must think it over," I said.

"Think it over, faugh!" She actually snorted. "You must come to me."

She spoke as though she would not even entertain the thought of a refusal. I, on the other hand, knew full well that Mama would never allow me to appear on a concert stage. The very notion would be unthinkable! Yet, though I tried to discourage Mrs. Weir from her intention of visiting my parents, my protests made no impression at all.

Her parting farewell included the words, "I will see your mother as soon as possible."

See her she did, the very next day, arriving at our home in a gray cloth suit, gray shoes and a gray bonnet with a magenta feather, looking, as Mama said later, "impossibly theatrical."

She talked to Mama and Papa with the same driving insistence that she had revealed the previous evening. But as I had anticipated, she met with a total rebuff. My parents were, by turns, amazed, amused, and incredulous. At last, she regretfully gave up, bade them a pained farewell, and, shrugging her shoulders, went toward the front door. I walked with her.

"I'm sorry," I said.

She favored me with one of her intense stares. "Do not be sorry, yet, my dear. This may not be the last time we shall meet. You might come to me, after all."

I said politely, "Perhaps I shall," and waved at her as she went to her carriage, privately convinced that we would never see each other again.

Yet, as I watched her carriage, a handsome equipage, its shining black door stamped with the gold initials JW and drawn by two beautifully matched grays, drive off, I was really regretful. I had always known my talent for music was out of the ordinary and, if I were doomed, as Mama had said, to look through other people's lighted windows, it seemed to me that I would not feel so cold if I were to do it from a concert stage. However, given my social standing, such an idea was out of the question. Young women of gentle birth did not air their abilities in public places. Though the concert hall enjoyed a prestige considerably above that of the stage, it was still a theater and furthermore it was known that musicians, not excluding composers, were men and women of depraved character. News of the licentious behavior of Liszt, Wagner, and their circle had penetrated even the fastness of our little town. And despite Liszt's recent and incredible assumption

of holy orders, no moral person could ignore the scandal of his earlier life. Indeed, it was even considered daring to play his music and after Mrs. Weir had gone, Mama was inclined to attribute what she described as her "dreadful suggestion," to my playing of Liszt at the Langs and openly wondered if I should not cast his works from my repertory.

Naturally, I didn't pay any heed to a prohibition I considered ridiculous. I went on playing Liszt as well as other composers and in a matter of weeks, I had almost managed to put Mrs. Weir out of my mind. Then, something happened that made me forget her completely. My parents were killed.

The accident that ended their lives was so useless, so meaningless! They had gone out driving one April afternoon. As I write, I can still see them—Papa, in a pale beige suit and soft hat, looking marvelously fit and youthful for his fifty-two years, and Mama, lovely in a new lavender walking dress. She was wearing a fetching little bonnet to frame her pretty face and she had tied a big lacy bow under her chin. They had asked me to come with them, but I could see that their invitation was only a polite gesture. They had met one spring day and the thirtieth anniversary of that meeting was only a week away. I had the impression that they wanted to relive that first joyful encounter. Certainly, they were relieved when I made my excuses. They didn't even take Nate, our groom. Instead, Papa harnessed Jenny, our mare, to the pony cart and the two of them bowled off, looking ecstatically happy. Mama, clutching Papa's arm, turned back to wave at me.

Seemingly, it was a perfect day for an afternoon drive. There wasn't even a hint of rain in the air, but suddenly a squall blew up out of nowhere. I was in the music room practicing at the time and saw the sky grow so threatening, I couldn't believe it. I remember hoping that Papa and Mama found some shelter. I was worried when Jenny returned without them, but I still thought that she might

have bolted when they climbed down from the cart. From the vantage point of years, I can see that I was only trying to reassure myself. My worry mounted when the rain ceased, as it did after only a half hour and they still did not appear. I sent Nate out to look for them.

He found Papa lying on the old stone bridge that arched over the stream. Both he and Mama must have been tossed out when Jenny bolted. He had hit his head against the wall and, later, the doctor told me he had probably died instantly. Mama was not found until the following day. She had been catapulted into the rain-swelled stream and her body, borne by the current, was wedged between two boulders.

The blow had fallen too suddenly. I was not prepared for it. I didn't know what to do. The house seemed terribly empty, but at times, it was not empty enough. Sometimes on rounding a bend in our hall, I would come on one or another of our five servants, weeping. Then, there were the odd moments when I thought I heard my parents talking in another room only to remember that they were dead. I hardly recall the funeral. I think the hearse had black plumes and the undertaker had furnished mutes, who followed the coffin, weeping. All our friends came, I know that—but Judy did not. Only Will attended, looking stern and pale. He and I had little to say to each other. Sometime in the last year or so, we had fallen out of sympathy. Shared grief did not draw us any closer together.

I had thought I knew all about grief—after all I had lost Brian—but as the days passed, I found that I had known nothing about it. I had never experienced the stunned, hollow feeling that was with me each morning when I woke up and each night when I tried to sleep. I had never known sleepless nights or nights that I wished could be sleepless because I kept envisioning the accident and found myself staring down at Papa's broken head and Mama's drowned body.

I had never known what it was to want to tell those you had lost how very much you had loved them. I wondered if Mama and Papa understood that I had adored them, even when we had argued, even when I was as willful and stubborn as a woman of twenty-two never should have been. Nor had I known what it was to miss them and realize that I would never, never, never see them again.

However, though the tragedy had thrown me into a deep melancholia, I was far better off than my sister. Judy's child was born prematurely, a weak little boy who lived only two days, turning Judy into a wraith-like version of the woman Will had married, and etching new lines on Will's brow.

I have only vague memories of what happened in the next few months. Lawyers came and went. Will officiated and eventually I was informed that I was wealthy in my own right, having inherited half of the estate as well as a half-interest in Clinton House. Judy and Will had the other half. They made arrangements to move in. I welcomed their presence, yet, at the same time, I was not quite comfortable after their arrival because the servants deferred to them and I was treated as I always had been by my parents, as a younger daughter, now with my decisions made for me by Will instead of Papa. It was a situation that did not improve in the ensuing weeks. Yet, I expect I would not have minded it so much if it had not been for the stand they took about my music.

Judy, weak and ill, could not bear to hear the sound of my piano as she passed through the halls. She made that very clear one afternoon three weeks after the funeral. Bursting into the music room as she had once before, she looked at me out of her hollowed tragic eyes and said, "How . . . how c-could you be p-playing f-for your own s-selfish p-pleasure with M-Mama and P-Papa and little W-Will cold in their g-graves. It . . . it's just like with p-poor Brian. You're heartless, Barbary, utterly, utterly heartless and Will agrees with me!"

Later, she apologized for her outburst, but she did not withdraw her opposition to my music. Will, too, was apologetic. "Of course she did not mean it, Barbary, but," he added coldly, "I do think you spend too much time at your piano. After all, you are not and never can be a professional musician. It seems to me that you ought to think of something more constructive to do. I'd discussed this with your mother, you know, and she was in accord with me."

To say that his words surprised me would be putting it mildly. They chilled me to the very bone. Implicit in that statement was a vision of a future in which he would support his every argument with the supposed opinions of the defenseless dead. Knowing Mama, I was sure that she could not have agreed with Will but, on the other hand, I could not prove it and with my supportive sister ranged on his side, I would have a very difficult time indeed, especially given Will's prejudice against the arts. Either I would need to spend my days defying them, which meant living in an atmosphere which was far from conducive to serenity, or I would have to capitulate and become Will's dutiful sister-in-law, devoting my time to "good works," or I could follow Judge Parry's suggestion and become a nurse. None of these alternatives pleased me. I should have liked to have told him so. The words formed in my mind and bubbled in my throat, but I realized I could not argue with him at that moment. It would have been too cruel to quarrel with a man who had only recently buried his first born and eagerly-awaited son, but as we parted, I was hardly sanguine. I knew that the subject would come up again. I also knew that, as an unmarried woman, I would be expected to defer to his dictums since he was head of the household and my keeper, as well as my brother-in-law. It was a situation which both infuriated and frightened me. I had a dismal foreboding that it would grow worse, not better, and given his dislike of my music, I would not even have that as a compensation. As it was, I

longed to return to the music room, but I did not dare and the resulting silence was terrible to me.

On an afternoon in late September when the house seemed particularly stifling, I came out into the garden. It was warm outside, too, but at least there was a breeze stirring. I wandered down the path, looking sadly at the chrysanthemums. They were particularly beautiful that year and Mama would have been so pleased. She had always loved them and it was due to her tending that they had grown so large and bloomed so gloriously.

"Miss Clinton," someone called from the garden gate.

Startled, I turned to find Mrs. Weir standing before it. She was wearing a bright yellow dress and carried a yellow parasol. Though her costume was startling, it was also welcome to me who had been condemned to wear and see nothing but deepest mourning for the past five months. I hurried to admit her, saying, "Mrs. Weir, I didn't know you were in town."

"How might you know when you have been immured behind these walls? At least that is what my cousins have told me. I was very sorry to hear about your parents' deaths, but I feel even sorrier for you, my dear. I came as soon as I thought it permissible. You must return with me, my dear. You will wither in this house and all your artistry will go for naught."

I looked at her incredulously. It was on the tip of my tongue to refuse her, when into my mind popped a picture of my piano, its keyboard closed and locked, its voice, which was my voice, too, stilled in obedience to my family's wishes. My new family would be as adamant in its refusal of Mrs. Weir's astounding offer as my parents had been, even more so if that were possible. But, I thought with a surge of defiance, I was twenty-two and in December, I should be twenty-three. When I was thirty-three would I still be deferring to the wishes of my sister and brother-in-law? I, Barbary Clinton, for whom my grandfather had

once predicted an exciting life? I said to Mrs. Weir, "When would you like me to come?"

Her smile broadened, "This very day, if you choose. I am here to fetch you."

Though her attitude was extremely cordial, I was hesitant. There was something about the woman that I did not like, though I should have been hard put to define my antipathy. Perhaps it was her eagerness or perhaps it was one of those warnings for which one has no name. At that moment, I think I would have tempered my eager acceptance with a semi-refusal had not Judy suddenly called from the morning room, "Barbary, Barbary, where are you?"

There was a peremptory note in her voice that I had never heard before. "Excuse me," I muttered, stepping to the garden door. Opening it a crack, I said, "I'm out here. What do you want?"

She came to the threshold. "Nothing. I just wondered where you were. What are you doing out there?"

I hesitated, wondering if I should mention Mrs. Weir. I decided against it. "I've been walking," I said truthfully. "It's a perfect fall day. The sun's so lovely and there's a nice breeze." The moment I had spoken, I was sorry. I did not want her to join me.

I need not have worried. She had scarcely ventured from the house in the last few months. She had spent most of her time in her room, grieving. Now she fetched up a lugubrious sigh and said, "It's all so easy for you, Barbary. I wish I could shrug away sorrow as you do."

She had passed from real grief into a state of self-pity intermingled with self-dramatization. She wanted comforting and looked on me to provide it. I was not in the mood. She had robbed me of my greatest comfort, my music, and Mrs. Weir's presence made me more aware of it than ever. I said, "I'll go back into the garden now that you know where I am."

"As you choose," she groaned, shutting the door smartly in my face.

I found Mrs. Weir admiring the flowers. "Such a pretty place," she said. "We also have a beautiful garden at Weir Hall. You must see it."

"I shall," I smiled. "I shall come within the week."

Of course, my own acquiescence was the easiest part of the situation. Both my sister and my brother-in-law were loud and vociferous in their arguments against my decision. Meeting Mrs. Weir, they were scarcely civil to her, even after she assured them that she would care for me with the vigilance of a mother.

Will was difficult, but Judy was much worse. Not only did she point out the folly of going off into what she described as "the wilderness" with a woman I scarcely knew, she enlarged upon the duty I owed her. "You can't leave me at such a time, Barbary," she wailed. "Have you no heart?"

"You've suggested more than once that I haven't," I retorted tartly.

"You know I didn't mean it," she said pathetically. "I did apologize. Oh, Barbary, you can't leave me all alone."

"You have Will," I said stubbornly.

"I want you, too," she cried, throwing her arms around me in a display of sisterly affection as surprising as it was unwelcome to me. "And furthermore, if you were to play in public the way that terrible woman says you might, Will would never let you back in our home again!"

"To whose home do you refer?" I demanded hotly. "You seem to forget that I own half of this house, Judy."

She was momentarily deflated, but recovered enough to say, "That might be, but he'd never speak to you again."

"I could bear that," I shrugged.

She flushed, "It's all very well for you to be horrid and sarcastic, but if you should perform in public, have you considered the scandal you'd bring down upon us and

upon our innocent children," she emitted a tiny sob, "if . . . if God sends us any others?" She shuddered, looking at me as if my future public would be composed of cockroaches and lice.

"At this particular moment, I'm not going to perform in public, I am only going on a visit to Mrs. Weir."

"She's a foreigner, you know," Judy said. "Betsy Lang told me that she's Hungarian. They're all very strange—Hungarians, and Betsy seems to believe she's the strangest of the lot."

"Which is why she keeps inviting her to visit them?" I asked.

"Nicholas invites her," Judy said. "She was married to one of his distant cousins, but he didn't even know of her existence until she called upon him one day. He finds her amusing, but Betsy doesn't. I don't think she likes her at all."

That was hardly the argument that could have convinced me of Mrs. Weir's unacceptability, since Nicholas Lang was considerably more intelligent and discerning than his young wife. However, since I did not want to precipitate another quarrel, I refrained from saying so. I decided to be a little conciliating instead. "I might not be considered talented enough to perform in public, you know. But at least I'll be able to practice. I need my music."

She flushed. "Well, if it comes to that, you can play here. I expect I have been selfish about it."

"I need to get away, Judy," I said firmly. "I am of age and I have my own money."

"How do you know that that woman will not find some way to defraud you of it?" Judy inquired. "I don't like her. There's something . . . unwholesome about her."

Since I was secretly in accord with her, at least on her latter statement, I was loud in my protests. "Nonsense, you know nothing whatever about her."

"And neither do you!" my sister retorted hotly.

"I know she's very kind and she loves my music, which is more than I can say for either you or Will."

"But I've told you . . ." she began.

"Let's not go into that again," I begged. "You'll grudgingly allow me to play my piano in *our* house. Your husband will continue to pull long disapproving faces and talk about your nerves. You will sigh at the dinner table and look long-suffering the rest of the time and I shall be miserable. My mind is made up, Judy. I am going to visit Mrs. Weir." As I concluded, I found that in trying to convince Judy I had at least convinced myself of the wisdom of my decision.

Since they could not prevail upon me to go back on my word, Judy and Will subsided into sulky acquiescence. After that, there was the flurry of getting my clothes in order and packing. There was also another minor crisis having to do with Ellen, Judy's personal maid, whom, she insisted, must accompany me, my own Clara having recently gotten married.

I did not want to accept this generous offer. I didn't want Ellen with me. She was a tall, dour, disapproving girl, who was afflicted with sniffles. She was also much given to hymn-singing as she worked around Judy's chamber; she belonged to a church which looked upon all non-members as doomed to damnation and she had made herself extremely unpopular with our other servants by going into impromptu sermons at dinner below stairs. I described her to Mrs. Weir, who immediately asserted that I must not take her since there were girls aplenty who could assist me at the Hall. Judy's capitulation on this point was so reluctant that I had the impression Ellen had agreed to spy on me. I was extremely grateful to Mrs. Weir for supporting me in my decision. At that period, I wanted to be entirely free of family ties, or ropes as they seemed to be in my case.

The preparations for my journey took about four days, but, because of the emotional strain, it seemed much longer.

Finally, I had bade Judy and Will a damp farewell—at least it was damp on my sister's part. I was really out of patience with her. "You act as if I were going off to . . . to Babylon instead of Salem, which is not even a day's journey away."

"I . . . I had a bad dream, Barbary," Judy said. "I didn't think I ought to tell you about it, at least Will said I shouldn't. But I . . . I dreamt I heard you calling for help. You were sinking in some sort of pond, being pulled slowly down and . . . and there was no one to give you aid." She shuddered.

To my knowledge, Judy had never had a premonition. Consequently, I put her dream down to her inability to keep me at Clinton House against my will. "I'll be fine," I assured her. "You were probably dreaming about a swamp. I'm sure that if there are any on Mrs. Weir's land, she's had them filled in, but if she hasn't I will be sure and avoid them, if it will make you feel any better."

"Barbary." Judy clutched my arm. "Don't go. Please don't go!"

I could see that she was in dead earnest, but still I freed myself gently. "I'll write," I promised. "And," I repeated, "it's not the end of the world."

She gave me a long look and said strangely, "I wish I could be sure of that."

I tried to laugh away her fears, but I was not wholly successful and that annoyed me. My earlier qualms had vanished and I was really looking forward to my journey or "adventure," as I termed it in my own mind. The other aspect of it, the chance to play on the concert stage, still seemed wildly improbable to me, but at least I would enjoy the change of scene, even if it were only a matter of miles. It occurred to me that I should like to be even further away, oceans and continents away, yet, at the same time, I had many twinges of regret as I joined Mrs. Weir in her carriage—and with them, an unexplainable sense of

fear. This last I blamed on Judy and resented her for it, which made the thought of our parting even easier.

It was shortly after the carriage had rolled out of our gates that Mrs. Weir told me that we were not going by train, as originally planned. "I've decided to use the carriage all the way, my dear. It will take longer, but I really loathe public transportation. One meets so many undesirable people."

I was surprised by this observation. She had not struck me as a snob or a recluse, but naturally good manners kept me from commenting on it. "It seems a well-sprung carriage," I said.

"Indeed it is. It was made for Jonathan in Germany." She looked a little self-conscious. "I've not told you about Jonathan. I expect I must." There was both regret and reluctance in her tone. "I do hope you'll pardon his . . . idiosyncracies."

"Who is Jonathan?" I asked.

"My son," she sighed. Her eyes grew somber. "I had such hopes for him. He's such a fine musician. He inherited his talent from my side of the family—the Magyar strain, you understand."

"Oh, yes," I said, trying to sound knowledgeable. "The Magyar strain, of course."

"Music flows in our veins like blood," she continued. "But Jonathan is so highly strung, so sensitive." She heaved another sigh and stared at the floor.

I had a little twinge of fear. She spoke as if there were something amiss with the man . . . or boy. Man, I decided, looking at her. She was old enough to have a grown son. "He's a musician?" I asked, hoping for further information about Jonathan.

"Yes, a gifted violinist. In Europe, he studied with the great Joachim. It was the maestro's opinion that Jonathan had the makings of a Paganini." She paused and sighed a third time.

"He doesn't play anymore?" I asked.

"Only occasionally, my dear. I always hope . . . but alas, he seems to have lost all interest in music, in anything, in fact. He's sunk in melancholy and there's nothing I can do to relieve it."

"That's a pity," I said. "What caused it?"

"An illness he contracted while visiting my family estate near Brasso—in the Carpathians. He did not receive the proper treatment soon enough and his nerves have been badly affected." She shook her head. "I went there as soon as I heard the news, but I was too late. The letter had taken months to reach me—the postal service is very bad in Hungary. It took me almost as long to get to Brasso. I found him a changed person. He didn't even want to come home, but I insisted. I hoped that seeing familiar surroundings might restore his spirits . . ." Shaking her head, she fell into a brooding silence.

"It . . . didn't?"

"No," she said. "His melancholy remains. He's grown to abhor the sunlight, which, I am told, is a symptom of the illness. If he ever emerges from his room—which is seldom and only in the late afternoon—he has very little to say to any of us. He used to be such a charming boy, so happy. I used to tell him he was in love with life." Tears started to her eyes. "And now . . ." She hid her face in her hands. "It . . . it's very hard for me to take," she said in a muffled voice.

"Oh, dear, I am so sorry," I murmured.

She gave herself a little shake and looked up at me. "I didn't tell you this because I wanted your pity, my dear. I just thought that if you were ever to meet him in the halls . . . I didn't want you to be hurt by his indifference. You do understand, don't you?"

"How could I fail to understand?" I asked. "It's a shame."

"Yes," she nodded, "it is that . . . he's my only child."

"Oh, dear, it is a pity." Thinking about it, I wondered why she had not mentioned her son before. Had she

thought I would be frightened of him? Would I be? I wasn't sure. The idea of a dour melancholiac stalking through the halls to be encountered at odd moments was not particularly appealing to me. However, I reasoned that he would most certainly keep his distance. Shrugging my momentary nervousness away, I concentrated on the landscape as it began to show the fall colors which would be glorious in another couple of weeks. The sun was bright and the sky patched with chiffon-thin clouds. Remembering what Mrs. Weir had said about her son's prejudice against sunlight, I pitied him. Probably, like many musicians, he had been moody and difficult even before his illness. Judging from what I had read about the lives of composers, it was not hard to fall into such a state. I wondered what he looked like and conjured up the vision of a wild-eyed young man with disarranged hair and disordered clothes, a sort of cross between Byron and Paganini. I hoped he would resemble the former rather than the latter. Then, I tried to stop thinking about him, wondering at the same time why I was dwelling on the subject. Perhaps it was his name—Jonathan Weir. I liked the sound of it and I must admit that in spite of all his mother had told me about his infirmity, I was still eager to meet him. I had never known a violinist and I had never been to Europe. Perhaps I might get him to tell me about Vienna; I was sure he must have been in Vienna. I really envied him, then. He must have walked down the same streets that Beethoven had trod. By the time all those thoughts had crossed my mind, I was more than eager to meet him. I could hardly wait.

In describing her son's illness to me, Mrs. Weir evidently thought she had given me preparation enough for any problems I might encounter at the establishment she called Weir Hall. She had not, however, prepared me for the hall itself. We reached its general area in the late afternoon and coming upon it on its own vast acreage, I was amazed and

taken aback, not only by the mansion but by its approach. She had said it was some miles outside of Salem, but I did not see anything in the way of the city when we turned off the main road. Instead, we passed through a wide, uncultivated sweep of land, bisected with a road that would have been much improved by leveling. Only by clutching the strap beside me did I keep from bouncing off the seat or falling against Mrs. Weir. In saving myself, I wrenched my arm badly, making me glad I was so slender. Had I been heavier, I imagine I would have been even more uncomfortable. Much to my surprise, Mrs. Weir remained upright, even though she appeared to be barely touching her strap. I decided that, in common with those who join the navy and learn to negotiate the decks of storm-tossed vessels, she must have developed a species of "sea legs."

We remained on this bumpy road for several miles, passing a scattering of small houses which Mrs. Weir called "the village," and then, abruptly, we rumbled into a wood, where the tall, autumn-touched trees grew close together. A few of them looked as if they had been blasted by lightning and their dead branches meeting in a skeletal tangle overhead produced a most unpleasant effect. Indeed, coupled with my view of the territory through which we had just come, it brought one of Mr. Poe's poems forcibly to mind and under my breath, I repeated:

"It was down by the dark tarn of
Auber,
In the ghoul-haunted woodland of
Weir,
Here once, through an alley Titanic,
Of cypresses, I roamed with my
soul—

Of cypress with Psyche my soul . . ."

Poe, of course, had been writing about the season of November, but it was almost October and so the analogy

seemed close enough. The "dark tarn of Auber" recalled Judy's dream of a swamp and as for the "ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir," I could not restrain a little shudder at the peculiar aptness of the description. I was glad that the trees seemed to be mainly oaks and elms rather than cypresses, but all in all, I wished that I did not have such a ready command of Mr. Poe's verse in my head.

A few moments after we emerged from the woods, I spied the outlines of a dark red brick house, half hidden by more trees. Tall and gaunt in the deepening twilight, it looked so forbidding that I had an almost uncontrollable desire to beg Mrs. Weir to have her coachman turn and take me back to Clinton House. I really had to exert pressure on my tongue to keep it from uttering that most ungrateful and impolite sentiment.

"Ah, we're almost there," Mrs. Weir said with a sigh of relief that I was far from emulating. "I shall welcome a cup of tea, shouldn't you, my dear?"

I managed a weak smile. "Oh, yes, that would be most pleasant." I added, "Is it a very old house?"

"Yes. My husband's people built it many years ago. There used to be another house on the land, but that fell into decay in the latter part of the seventeenth century."

"Oh, how long have they lived here, then?" I demanded.

"Over two centuries. They're an old family, at least for America."

"They must have been here at the time of the witch trials, then?" I said.

She nodded, "I'm afraid that Gideon Weir, one of my husband's ancestors, was a persecutor of witches." She gave me an apologetic look. "I hope that doesn't distress you."

"Why should it?" I asked.

"It seems to me that Nicholas mentioned that there was a witch in your family."

"Yes, Ellen Crowne, my great-great-great grandmother,

but I don't really think she was a witch. She was only clairvoyant and she knew about herbal cures."

"She escaped persecution, I'm told."

"Oh, yes, the family hid her until all those nasty children recanted."

"I take it you don't believe in witchcraft," Mrs. Weir said.

"Heavens, no!" I exclaimed.

"That's very pleasant to hear, especially in this part of the country."

"Goodness, they don't still believe in witches here, do they?"

"Old beliefs have a way of lingering," she sighed. "Even in these enlightened times. You've no idea how many people around here still give our home a wide berth."

"Really, why?" I asked.

She raised her eyebrows, "Surely, I told you!" she exclaimed. "Or didn't I? So many things slip my mind these days. I expect it's my ever-present worry over my son."

"What haven't you told me?" I prompted, feeling very nervous.

She shrugged. "Don't look so alarmed, my dear. It's nothing of great moment. Years ago, there was a fire here. Some of our buildings were damaged. The main house was unscathed, but the owner, my late husband's great-grandfather, decided to rebuild it from brick."

"Oh," I said. "Isn't that a coincidence. Our house burned down too. In 1769."

"What caused the fire?" she asked.

"Oh, I think it was a candle catching the drapes or some such thing. No one was quite sure."

She smiled grimly. "My husband's family was *quite* sure what caused their blaze. It was set by a lunatic minister and some men he recruited from the village. He

got it into his head that they were related to the notorious Weirs of Edinburgh."

"The . . . notorious Weirs of Edinburgh?" I repeated.

"An obviously demented brother and sister, who accused each other of witchcraft. At the time of the fire, they had been dead for at least two generations. Furthermore, historians subsequently exonerated them. But around here, the legend lives and we are the sufferers. Isn't it ridiculous?"

"Goodness," I laughed, "do they also believe in fairies and hobgoblins?"

Some of the grimness faded from her eyes. "I'm glad you're such a sensible young woman, my dear," she said gratefully.

I smiled back, but actually, I was finding all this talk of modern superstition and ancient witchcraft both surprising and unpalatable. It seemed to me that she should have mentioned it earlier. I wondered at a reticence that also included her melancholy son and the isolation of her house. Somehow, she had given me the impression that she lived in the heart of the city, or perhaps I had only assumed as much since she had described her home as a mecca for music lovers.

The coach came to a stop. "Have we arrived?" I asked.

"No, they are only opening the gates."

We started up a few moments later, coming into a wide driveway; we continued on it for another ten minutes. Then, around a bend, I saw the house, looking even larger than I had anticipated, its bricks dyed a horrid blood-red by the diminished rays of the setting sun.

The coachman brought the horses to a stop and the footman, a dour-looking individual in green livery that did not flatter his sallow complexion, handed me out. Mrs. Weir followed and, taking my arm, led me up onto a wide veranda. Facing me was a huge oaken door adorned with a polished brass knocker in the shape of a dragon. Seeing that dark portal, I had a queasy feeling and found myself

markedly reluctant to proceed any further. Yet, of course, I had no choice. I could hardly turn and run.

Mrs. Weir lifted the dragon and dropped it against the door. In a few seconds it was opened by a tall man also in green livery. "Ah, Madame," he said with a brief smile. "Welcome home."

"Thank you, Payton," she said. "This is Miss Clinton, come to stay with us. I hope Mrs. Breen has her chamber prepared."

"Everything is in readiness," the butler replied.

"Good," she said. "Come in, my dear."

As I crossed the threshold, another literary allusion occurred to me. It was Dante's famed inscription over the gates of Hell. "Abandon Hope, All Ye Who Enter Here."

It was hardly the state of mind in which to enter a strange house, but once inside, the feeling persisted in spite of all my efforts to dismiss it. We came into a dark hall with a high vaulted ceiling, imperfectly illuminated by a round gas globe descending from its center.

"Good evening, Madame."

Startled, I turned to find a woman, who seemed to have materialized on the spot, so softly had she stepped into the hall. She was tall and spare with plain features set in a long thin face. Her eyes were of a gray so pale they looked almost white. She was wearing a gray gown topped by a small white apron. If she had worn a cap, as well, she might have emerged from a painting of the old Puritans who first settled Massachusetts.

"Ah, Mrs. Breen," Mrs. Weir said cordially. "Miss Clinton, this is my housekeeper without whom we at Weir Hall could not exist." She gave a fond smile. "This is Miss Clinton, Breen."

The housekeeper dropped a slight curtsey. "I bid you welcome, Miss."

"Thank you, Mrs. Breen," I said.

"You will send Nancy to attend her," Mrs. Weir ordered.

Mrs. Breen looked disapproving. "Nancy's gone, Madame."

"Gone?" Mrs. Weir echoed. "Gone where?"

"I don't know, Madame. She just packed and left—without a word to any of us."

"When?" Mrs. Weir shot the question at her.

"About two days ago, Madame. I expect she went back to Boston. She never did like it here, much."

"Well," Mrs. Weir frowned, "that was most unmanly, not to let you know. Have you found a replacement?"

"Well as to that, Madame . . ." Mrs. Breen hesitated.

"Yes," Mrs. Weir prompted.

"Help is in short supply. The only person I could find is Agnes Sykes . . . she's not as young as you might like. Close on forty, she is, but she's eager to come if we'll have her."

"Have her, have her," Mrs. Weir said impatiently. "If she needs the work, perhaps she'll stay." She gave me a look of comic dismay. "It seems I should have allowed you to bring your Ellen, after all, my dear, but never fear. Agnes will be here tomorrow. You'll not be unattended."

"I shouldn't mind if I were," I said hastily. "I'd as lief do for myself. I have been—since Clara left."

"You're most accommodating," my hostess said, "but I wouldn't think of it. Meanwhile, you must be sadly tired. Would you like to rest a bit before dinner?"

She had mentioned tea and I really wanted a cup of it, but I didn't like to remind her. Besides, I was beginning to feel very weary and the thought of lying down on something that did not jounce was infinitely beguiling. "Yes, I think I would," I replied.

"Very good," she smiled. "Show Miss Clinton to her room, Breen."

If I had been reluctant to enter the house, I was even more reluctant to follow the housekeeper up the circular staircase that I now noticed for the first time. Looking up,

it seemed to me as if it led into a cavern. The image did not decrease as I followed Mrs. Breen up to the second floor. The hall was dim and shadowy. It was also wide and to my left was a series of tall windows facing the front of the house and through which a few fugitive rays of sunlight still stole, enough to let me see that there was another corridor on the right, down which Mrs. Breen led me. The light was dimmer here, but I did see a series of paneled doors widely spaced apart, hinting at huge rooms—how huge, I didn't realize until Mrs. Breen opened a door at the end of the corridor and led me into a large chamber. To my surprise and delight, it was as cheerful and bright as the halls were dank and dark. A fire was burning in a large hearth and there were gas brackets set along walls papered in a scenic design of a classic garden. There was a canopied bed, similar to the one I had at home, but hung in a delectable sea-green silk that matched the draperies at the windows and was picked up by a velvety carpet and by cushions on a chaise longue. All the furniture was Louis XVI—lovely tables, chairs and cabinets either gilded or ornamented with gold leaf. The overall effect was one of great luxury and I must say that it raised my spirits.

"Your portmanteau is here, Miss." The housekeeper led me to a dressing room that opened on a large bathroom with marble appointments and gold fixtures.

"Oh, lovely," I breathed.

She gave me a brief, unsmiling nod. "It's a pity we don't have Nancy to unpack for you, Miss. I can't imagine what made her go off like that . . . I'm needed below stairs now, but I'll be up later to do it for you. Shall I help you to undress?"

"Oh, no, you needn't," I said quickly, but even as I protested, her deft fingers were at the buttons, hooks, and snaps of my heavy gown. In minutes, she had removed it. Stepping into the dressing room, she returned with a light cashmere shawl which she draped about me. "I'll be back later, Miss," she promised and hurried out of the room.

I did not want to open the bed. I intended to nap an hour at the most. Consequently, I curled up on the chaise longue, which proved to be down-filled and marvelously soft. I took a second look around the room and this time I saw that the ceiling was decorated with another landscape, a mythological glade in which plump cupids flew around the heads of lightly clad nymphs and satyrs dancing in a ring around a center maiden, clad only in her flowing golden hair. I was glad Will could not see it for certainly he would have disapproved. Judy would have been shocked, too, but I found it very beautiful—the whole room was beautiful and more luxurious than I had ever expected. The Weirs must be very wealthy indeed, I decided. Remembering my sister's fears concerning my hostess's possible designs on my money, I laughed merrily. I also laughed at my earlier fears. I had the feeling that I was really going to enjoy my visit.

The softness of the chaise longue and the warmth generated by the fire increased my drowsiness. In no more than a few minutes, I fell into a heavy sleep, patchworked by dreams. At one moment, I was back home in the summer-house with Brian looking at me solemnly and warningly. At another, I saw Mrs. Weir's face and was startled by her eyes which had become enormous. Then, I was drifting through a bleak, shadowy landscape in which I saw marble urns, broken marble blocks and headless, marble torsos, the sort I had once viewed in Boston's Institute of Fine Arts. They faded away to be replaced by a violin with broken strings, and underneath the dream was a sort of throbbing urgency, which I could not quite comprehend but which frightened me. I felt as though I were being warned about something. Then, suddenly, I was awakened by sound; a door had opened and closed. Looking around me, I found that it was dark outside and the blazing fire had sunk to a mass of glowing embers.

Jumping up, I ran to my door expecting to find Mrs.

Breen outside, but the long hall was empty. Since it would have been impossible to cross from my room to the stairs in so brief a time, I decided that the sound, too, must have been part of that disturbing dream. I wondered how long I had slept and going back to the closet, examined the little lapel watch I had pinned to my dress. Much to my chagrin and surprise, I found that it was close on seven. My nap had taken a full two hours!

I hurried into the bathroom, where I was immensely pleased to find an additional luxury—there were both hot and cold water laid on. There was also a shower bath above the large tub. I yearned to immerse myself in a long bath, but there wasn't time. I contented myself with washing my face and then I unbraided my hair, for it had become sadly mussed. On a shelf, I found a lovely gold-backed brush with stiff bristles and I gave my hair fifty of the required hundred strokes. I was about to rebraid it when there was a tap at my door. This time, I knew it was not part of a dream. Pulling my shawl about me, I hurried to open it.

Mrs. Breen was standing outside, and as I asked her to enter, I saw a man pass down the hall. Though it was too dark to see his features, I did have an impression of large eyes that caught the light streaming from my open door, and then he was gone.

I felt a little self-conscious at having been seen with my hair unbound and with only a shawl to cover my camisole and petticoats. "Oh, dear," I exclaimed. "I expect that was Mr. Weir."

"Yes," the housekeeper acknowledged regretfully, "he's astir, now, poor young gentleman."

I felt sorry for him, too. "Isn't there a chance that he might get better?" I asked.

She shrugged. "I reckon there's always hope," she said dubiously. "Will you be needing me to help you dress, Miss?"

"No, please," I assured her. "I can manage."

"Very good, Miss."

She was about to turn away when I said, "I seem to have overslept. I hope I haven't inconvenienced Mrs. Weir."

"Oh, no, Miss," she smiled briefly, "it was good you had a nice rest. Supper's waiting down in the morning room." She bobbed a curtsy and left me.

I dressed hastily. Then, coming out of my room, I found myself in near-Stygian darkness. There was only a single, dim light in the hall, hardly enough to illumine the long passageway. The glow from a three-quarter moon shining through the windows was of some help, but the stairs were very dark with only the feeble glow issuing from the gas globe below to show me their treads. I went down slowly and cautiously, gripping the bannister tightly. As I reached the bottom, I was startled by a beam of bright light. With a little gasp, I came to an abrupt stop.

"Oh, dear, I think I've startled you." It was Mrs. Weir, carrying an oil lamp. "I was coming to bring you this. It's difficult finding your way through this house after nightfall, but we've had to accustom ourselves to it since Jonathan's return. As I think I mentioned, he can't bear bright light, you see."

"Oh, I see," I said.

She gave me an apologetic smile. "I'm afraid you'll think this a very odd household."

"No, not at all," I assured her mendaciously.

"Come, no need to prevaricate, my dear. I know what you must be feeling. However, if you hadn't slept so long . . ."

"I'm sorry for that," I said hastily.

"Nonsense, why should you be sorry? I'm sure you're the better for your rest. You look blooming. Such a lovely color in your cheeks, my dear. You're a very beautiful girl, you know. But come, we'll have supper now. You must be famished after your long journey. Afterward, I'll show you the music room." She paused, then added hesitantly, "I expect you're much too tired to play tonight."

"Oh, no," I assured her. "I should love to play if your son wouldn't mind."

"No, indeed. If he were to hear you . . ." There was an eagerness in her eyes and her voice. "It might serve to . . . to stimulate his own passion for music. . . ."

Listening to her, I had a revelation. I saw exactly why she had been so eager for me to visit her. It was not to further my own expectations, but rather to restore those of her son. Anger stirred in me. I had been tricked!

She put her free hand on my arm. "You're wrong, my dear," she said gently.

"W-Wrong?" I stammered, startled by the perspicacity I read in her eyes.

"It's not difficult to guess your thoughts, my poor child," she smiled. "I didn't bring you here to serve the interests of my unhappy son. Oh, I shan't say it wasn't in my mind that hearing you practice might help to inspire him, but I must tell you that at the end of next week, I am expecting another house-guest, Professor Walter Steinholz."

"W-Walter Steinholz!" I exclaimed.

"Ah, I see you have heard of him. But, of course, what aspiring musician has not? Dear Walter is always looking for young talented artists. It was he who sponsored the debut of the great Frederick Coombe. I have already told him of your prowess and he is looking forward to meeting you. I am so glad I shall not have to disappoint him."

"Oh," I breathed. "Oh, Mrs. Weir."

She laughed. "You may believe yourself out in the wilderness, here, my dear, but you are approaching the entrance of New York's Academy of Music."

"Oh," I said again, "I . . . I can hardly believe it."

"I am a woman who stands by my word, Barbary. Besides, I have promised myself that the world must hear you. Steinholz will be your guide to that world. But I have kept you talking long enough. You must have your supper."

I followed her down a long hall. The light from her

lamp showed me that the walls were hung with portraits. I caught glimpses of men in high-crowned hats and stiff white collars and women in neat white caps. There was also a man in a heavily curled periwig and a woman of the Georgian period with her hair dressed high over a cushion. I was not much interested in these; we had our share of portraits at home; besides, all my thoughts were centered on the forthcoming visit of Professor Steinholz. I was half excited, half frightened at the idea of meeting and playing for this influential gentleman. Though he would not be arriving for nearly a fortnight, I had not had much of an opportunity to practice lately. I wondered if I would be at my best. I was not sure. I wished that I might have had a longer time in which to prepare.

"Here we are." Mrs. Weir had stopped in front of a door which opened into a small octagonal chamber. It proved to be a charming room. Its walls were covered with a blue and white paper, a Delft design which matched the tiles edging a small fireplace and the draperies as well. It was centered by an octagonal table covered with a snowy, linen cloth and set with heavy old silver and Delft china.

Putting the lamp on the table, Mrs. Weir motioned me to a chair and rang a small bell. A few moments later, a girl, who could not have been more than fourteen, rushed in. She was wearing a black uniform and a snowy apron, both of which appeared sizes too large for her thin, bony little body. Her hair, which was untidily knotted at the back of her neck, was pushed under a white cap. She looked desperately ill at ease. "Yes, Madame?" she said, twisting, reddened hands together.

Mrs. Weir seemed serenely unaware of the girl's nervousness. "You may give Miss Clinton supper, Betty."

"Yes, Madame," she mumbled, executing a writhe that was evidently meant to be a curtsy.

After she had gone, Mrs. Weir shook her head. "We do have difficulty getting help out here. All I can say for Betty is that she's willing. I'm hoping that between Mrs.

Breen and myself, we can train her to be a reasonably competent waitress, though I am afraid she's not very bright."

"It must be a problem," I murmured politely, wondering a little dolefully if the cook were similarly inept. I did not have a particularly hearty appetite, but I did appreciate a good cuisine.

I need not have worried. The meal, which consisted of a delicately-seasoned chicken dish, beautifully-cooked vegetables, a crisp salad with a delicious and exotically-flavored dressing, and a large wedge of lemon pie that literally melted in the mouth, was what Papa would have termed "sheer ambrosia."

"Your cook's a wonder!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, she's a real jewel," she agreed. "Fortunately, Mrs. Szalay is from my family's estate. Her people have worked for the Zsigmonds for generations and when I married, she begged to come with me. She's utterly faithful, as she has proved more than once."

"Oh?" I asked, wondering how she had demonstrated this loyalty.

"You've no idea how unscrupulous guests can be." Mrs. Weir shook her head. "Many of them have dared to go into my kitchen and offer her princely sums to leave me and enter their service."

"Gracious, that is unscrupulous," I agreed. "What a dreadful thing to do!"

"They lived to regret it," she smiled grimly. "Mrs. Szalay's code of ethics is written in letters of fire. She chased one man out of the kitchen with a cleaver and stabbed another with a red hot fork.

"Oh, my," I exclaimed, privately resolving never to venture near the kitchen. I could also understand Betty's nervousness. I shouldn't have liked to be in hourly contact with the ethical but temperamental Mrs. Szalay. It was certainly a unique household, though not one designed to put a guest entirely at her ease, I thought.

"I expect you'd like to see the music room," Mrs. Weir prompted.

"Oh, indeed, I should!" I agreed enthusiastically, remembering that the piano was one of my main reasons for coming and far more important to my happiness than a well-schooled staff of servants.

I had thought my chamber and the morning room lovely, but the music room surpassed them both. It was magnificent! Its walls were pale green and its high ceiling of sculptured plaster was decorated with a circular bas relief of the nine muses in gold leaf. It was centered by an exquisite crystal chandelier and the carpet, also green, was a beautiful Aubusson. On one side of the double doors, opening into the hall, was a small organ with its pipes set into the wall above it. On the other side more pipes were set into the opposite wall. These were framed by an ornamental border of flowers intermingled with various musical instruments. At the far end of the room were double doors leading into the garden.

The piano, a Chickering, had a magnificent painted case and its legs were beautifully carved. Nearby was an old chest which Mrs. Weir opened to show me stacks of music, all for the piano. Sighing, she indicated another chest across the room. "That contains violin music and here . . ." she opened a cabinet and showed me a leather violin case, "this is his Stradivarius."

"Oh," I exclaimed reverently, "and he doesn't play it anymore?"

"No, in the year he has been home, he hasn't touched it!"

Moving away from the cabinet, she pointed to a fine marble statue of a woman playing a harp. "This is the work of William Henry Rinehart," she said. "Over here . . ." she walked across the room to a seated Orpheus, "is another of his works. My late husband was extremely partial to his style."

All the while she had been showing me these treasures, I was conscious of the piano; its mute keys were calling to me, as beguilingly as ever a siren sang to Ulysses. My fingers were playing arpeggios on my skirts and in the back of my eyes, I was seeing treble and clef signs.

"And this . . ." Mrs. Weir had stopped at the painting of a group of people with instruments, "is a Zoffany, he . . ." she paused and laughed, "my dear, please, go to your piano."

I needed no second invitation. I almost ran to it and seated myself on the bench. I pushed back the cover and played a tentative scale. The tone was magnificent, a deep sonorous base and a crystalline treble. It was truly a treasure, so much of a treasure that I had a compulsion to play all my favorite pieces, one after the other. However, since that would have taken the whole of the night and some of the following day as well, I decided upon "Mazeppa" from the "Transcendental Etudes." The music sounded as it had never had on my old Bechstein or on the instruments I had played at the houses of my friends. When I finally finished, Mrs. Weir applauded loudly.

"That was superb, my dear. Oh, I can hardly wait to have Professor Steinholz hear you. I do wish he were coming sooner! One day, I shall be telling all my friends that the great Barbary Clinton was my house-guest and they won't believe me!"

Naturally, her words excited me. "You are too kind," I said. "Some of the credit must go to this piano. It is a wonderful instrument!"

"Yes, it is very fine. My husband had it made to his specifications."

"Was he a musician, too?" I asked, never having heard Nicholas Lang speak of his late cousin.

She shook her head. "He was an appreciator, poor man. The arts held great fascination for him, but though he tried all of them, he had talent for none of them. He . . . he was

so proud of Jonathan . . .” Her voice trembled and she broke off, staring moodily at her clasped hands.

“Has he been dead a long time?”

“Three years, only. In the space of three years, I’ve lost both my husband and my son. It doesn’t seem fair.”

“But your son’s not dead,” I reminded her gently.

“No, not dead, but changed so dreadfully. In the old days, if he’d heard you play, he’d have been at your feet, but as you see . . .”

I felt chagrined, as if my music had been found wanting in some degree. In spite of what she had told me about Professor Steinholz, I was more than ever convinced that my presence at Weir Hall was less for my benefit than to rouse her son from his apathy.

“Oh, my dear girl, I’ve hurt you,” she said, moving quickly to my side. “No, do not contradict me. Yours is an easy face to read. You’ve not mastered the art of dissimulation. You are quite refreshingly open and honest, which is much to your credit. Believe me, child, you are here because I do want to help you and because I need a young person about this great, gloomy place. I’ll not deny that I’d hoped your marvelous artistry might provide the spark necessary to stir my boy from his depression but . . .” she shrugged, “I’ll not continue trying to assure you of my good intentions. I shall let my actions take the place of words.”

I felt terribly ashamed of myself. “Oh, Mrs. Weir, I am truly happy to be with you and I am grateful.”

“Good.” She gave me a fond look. “You little know what it means to me to have you here. I have been so lonely . . . but no more of that. You are here and I must make you comfortable for I want, at least, I hope, you’ll want to stay a long time.”

I bent over the keyboard hastily so that she might not see my candid face and realize that her words had hit me like a splash of icy water. I did not want to stay a long

time! For some reason I could not even understand, my earlier doubts had returned. Coupled with them was a strong dislike for my affable and accommodating hostess. I could not explain my antipathy, as I had no reason for it. Searching my mind, I put it down to leaving home, for though I could not honestly say that I missed either Judy or Will, I did love Clinton House. Then, of course, there was traveling fatigue . . . anyway, whatever it was, I knew I could not remain in Mrs. Weir's company without inadvertently revealing my feelings. In self-defense, I produced a large yawn, pointedly covering it with my hand. "Oh, dear, pray excuse me," I said on a weary sigh. "I am suddenly so tired."

"I expected you might be," she said quickly. "Should you like to retire?"

"Oh, yes," I said gratefully. "I know I'll be the better for a night's rest."

"I quite understand," she nodded. "I, myself, shall be going to bed soon." She picked up the lamp she had brought in with her. "I'll light you to your chamber."

"Oh, I can find my way, I'm sure. You needn't trouble."

"It's no trouble at all," she smiled. "And until you become accustomed to this house, you'll need someone to guide you. You've no idea how many odd nooks and crannies there are. Sometimes, even in the daylight, you can get lost. I did often when I was first married."

"You're very kind," I said, knowing that I was speaking no more than the truth and wondering why I could not like her.

I bade goodnight to Mrs. Weir at my door and gratefully entered my chamber. It looked even more comfortable than it had in the afternoon. Someone, undoubtedly Mrs. Breen, had added new logs to the fire and it was blazing cheerfully. The gaslights along the wall had been turned

off, but the lamp on my night-table bathed the room in its soft glow. The covers of the bed had been turned down and my nightdress was lying on a pillow. Moving to the closet, I found my clothes had been unpacked. Instead of being grateful for this service, I wished they were still in my portmanteau and I far, far away from the castle that lay "East of the Sun and West of the Moon."

The phrase, culled from an old Scandinavian fairy tale I had once loved, startled me. It concerned a girl, I recollected, whose lover had been bewitched, condemned to be a bear by day and a prince by night. Eventually, she had been forced to seek him in a castle full of trolls, just at the moment when he was being wed to the troll queen's ugly daughter.

I laughed uneasily. My surroundings were certainly having an odd effect on my imagination—first Poe, then Dante, then trolls and Mrs. Weir, a troll queen." Then, I was really angry at myself, remembering all her kindnesses that day and the greater kindness to come, in the person of Professor Steinholz.

Thinking about him, I was much more sanguine than I had been earlier. My playing had not suffered during my enforced absence from the keyboard. I felt as secure as ever, as who would not, given that wonderful instrument, and tomorrow I would have all day to practice and no one to stand at the door and sigh as Judy had. Sternly, I told myself that I needed to remember all the benefits of being at Weir Hall. These certainly outweighed the fact that I did not like Mrs. Weir. Furthermore, given time to know her better, I was sure that I could leap that barrier as well.

I had intended to write in my diary that night. Certainly I had more to confide in it than I had had for a very long time. However, once I was in bed, I found the lie that I told Mrs. Weir had become the truth. The minute I slid down between sheets which, to my amazement, were silk, and put my head on the soft pillows, I became very tired.

Immediately upon turning down the lamp, I fell fast asleep.

It was amazing how conducive that room was to dreams, for I had another very vivid one that night. Indeed, it was so vivid that I could hardly believe it had not been a reality, but, of course, it was as improbable in content as most dreams are. It seemed to me that I was awakened by a sharp tap on my bedroom door.

Before I could speak, I heard the door open and presently in the moonlight I saw a shawdowy figure cross the room. From its size and shape, I knew it to be a woman. For a moment, I thought it was Mrs. Weir, but then I saw that she was much shorter and slighter than my hostess. My next guess was more alarming—was Weir Hall haunted? I had never seen a ghost, but . . . my meditations were cut short as the figure came to the foot of my bed, where, to my utter amazement, she bobbed a curtsy.

Between surprise and alarm, I shrank back against my pillows, asking, "W-What do you want?"

"I'm Nancy," she answered in a soft, sibilant voice, "I've come to do for you, Miss."

"B-But I—I thought . . ." I began, only to see another shape approaching the bed. This time, I had no difficulty in recognizing the tall robust form of Mrs. Weir. She was evidently fully dressed.

"What are you doing in here?" she whispered angrily.

The girl stiffened and turned to face her. "I've come to do for her, Madame," she answered with another curtsy.

"There's no need . . . she's very well. I've other work for you, now."

The girl remained where she was. "Other work?" she asked in a wind-like whisper, which I found singularly chilling.

"Other work," Mrs. Weir repeated, "which you'll find more to your liking, my girl." Compellingly, she added, "come."

The maid hesitated a moment longer. Though I could not see her face, I felt she was staring at me. Then,

stepping back from the bed, she silently accompanied Mrs. Weir from the room.

I tried to blink myself awake, but I was unsuccessful. In another second I had fallen asleep or, I had that impression, for naturally, I was already asleep.

I awakened early the next morning. The sky was that incandescent pearly blue that heralds the dawn and it gave promise of being a fair day. I was glad of that. I loved the sun and I wanted to go walking later in the morning. Then, my eye fell upon the foot of the bed and I remembered my dream. Had it been but a dream?

It had seemed so real, but that was impossible, I decided. Nancy had left Mrs. Weir's household, and besides, no maid would come to "do" for anyone in the middle of the night. She had not even been carrying a candle! "Nancy" must have been the result of too much food before retiring. Yet, I shouldn't have thought that Mrs. Breen's mention of her departure would have made such an impression on me. One certainly could not tell about the fancies that came in sleep. Mine were generally highly colored both in content and in hue. This dream had been different. The room had been dark, the figure shadowy and the moonlight not particularly strong, but logically, it had to have been a dream. There was no other explanation.

Once awake, it was difficult for me to lie in bed. At home, at least while my parents were still alive, I had always practiced during the early morning hours, I remembered wistfully. Then, with a surge of utter joy, I realized that I did not need to be wistful at Weir Hall—there was a piano in the music room and no one to protest if I played it!

It was just before seven when I came into the corridor. The gray light issuing through the tall windows revealed much more of it than I had seen the previous evening. There were fine parquet floors and oak-paneled walls. As I went toward the stairs, I wondered which of the doors I

was passing opened onto the chambers of the melancholy Jonathan, whose flagging spirits I had failed to rouse with my music. Or perhaps, I reasoned as I reached the stairs, he was on the left side of the house down the other corridor. I doubted if he were on the third floor; at Clinton House, those rooms were allocated to the servants and, of course, the nursery. Thinking about that warm, lovely place where Judy and I had spent so many happy hours, I felt a surge of unexpected homesickness. For a moment, I wished I were back at Clinton House, but then, the song of the siren piano was in my ears and I hurried down the stairs, emerging in the great hall and to confusion. On either side of me were long corridors, lit at each end by large windows—but I had traversed them in the dark and I had no idea as to the direction of the music room. Since there was no servant about to instruct me, I would have to depend upon trial and, I hoped, not too many errors.

Of course, I went in the wrong direction, for the first chamber into which I stepped proved to be the drawing room. I stopped short just beyond the threshold looking about me in wonder—in the light from tall French windows bare of shrouding drapery, I saw a sculptured ceiling and wall-paintings depicting a medieval pilgrimage, full of angular men and women in bright flowing costumes or suits of armor, on or accompanied by stylized chargers. There was a magnificent pink marble fireplace and over it hung the portrait of a stern-faced man in Puritan dress. I thought it not unlikely that he was Gideon Weir, the judge, and I wondered what he might have said had he been able to comment on that luxurious apartment with its polished tables, its throne-like chairs and quilted love-seats, its bibelots, and its fringed cushions. I could imagine his anger and I could almost hear his fiery denunciation of the devil's spawn, who had inhabited the land he and his father had wrested from the wilderness. Caught in the grip of my fancies, I fled his wrath and went on down the corridor.

Another wrong guess brought me into the dining room which had dark, red walls decorated with those still lifes of slain fowl and dead rabbits which also hung in our own dining room at Clinton House and which I had always avoided noticing when I ate dinner. The table was similar to our own—long and highly polished. It was centered by a beautiful silver epergne, but we owned one which was equally beautiful and the crystal and silver on the lengthy sideboard again brought memories of their counterpart at Clinton House, which pleased me until I realized that I was comforting myself for the marked contrast in the two houses, suggesting that I was animated by the spirit of envy. Certainly I did not need to be envious of Mrs. Weir; true, she appeared to be very rich, but her possessions had not brought her any joy. Judging from what she had told me, she was very lonely in this sequestered mansion. I would need to try and alleviate that condition, I thought. Perhaps when I got to know her better, I would like her more.

Coming from the dining room, I went back the way I had come and into the other corridor, where my next error introduced me to the library which, I was happy to note, proved to be considerably smaller than its counterpart at home. Bookshelves rose on either side of a medium-sized fireplace and there were more shelves on the opposite wall. A large desk stood near a pair of French windows opening onto a small stone balcony overlooking a part of the gardens.

The sun was rising now and I saw patterned beds of flowers and clipped hedges. I caught a glimpse of white among the greenery, which was probably a statue. In fact, the garden looked very promising and if I had not had the specter of the piano burning into my brain, I might have been inclined to take a stroll. I was about to resume my quest when I caught sight of a portrait hanging over the fireplace; it was that of a young man with a violin. Might it be a likeness of the melancholy Jonathan?

Coming closer, I knew it must be, for he bore a distinct resemblance to Mrs. Weir; it was in his dark eyes and his broad low forehead and the way his hair waved back from a small widow's peak. His other features were more classical than those of his mother. His nose was beautifully chiseled, and he had a firm, well-shaped mouth and the suggestion of a cleft in his chin. The artist had caught him in a pleasant mood, for a small smile curled his lips and there was a corresponding glint in his eyes. It was a handsome, almost beautiful face. I read sensitivity in it, but not melancholy. Before his illness, he must have been a charming man, a man I wished I might have known. Despite all his mother had told me, I still wanted to meet him. In fact, I was almost reluctant to cease my contemplation of his portrait, but finally I did and had my reward, for the next door I opened brought me into the music room.

On entering that chamber, I walked into the world I shared with Beethoven and Liszt, Schumann and Schubert. When I began to run through their works, I felt as if I were meeting a group of old and most beloved friends, which I had sorely missed. I had intended to practice about two hours, but when I finally closed the keyboard, the sun was high in the sky and a glance at my watch showed me that it was already twelve noon!

Feeling very self-conscious, I hurriedly left the music room and nearly bumped into Mrs. Weir, who was standing very near the doors. "Oh, my dear," she cried, seizing me by the shoulders, "I've been listening to you for the past hour and I have felt as if I were outside Parnasses! Such playing! Oh, I can hardly wait until Professor Steinholz hears you!" Pulling me to her, she kissed me exuberantly on both cheeks.

Unlike many women I know, I have never relished the easy embraces that our sex is wont to bestow upon one another, but my mood was exultant enough and her words were so pleasing to my ears that I could even steel myself

to return her salute. I found I liked her much better this morning. "You are very kind," I said appreciatively.

"I'm not kind at all," she contradicted. "I am only speaking the truth. I do feel so fortunate. It's not every hostess who can entertain a virtuoso of your caliber, my dear. It . . . it makes the illness of my son less hard to bear. Jonathan was your equal on the violin, but I told you that." She sighed and shook her head. "Enough of that. You've not had any breakfast, I know. Two or three times I came here to interrupt you, but I could not bring myself to do it. However, soon the bell will ring for dinner. I hope you are not famished."

I shook my head. "I forgot all about eating."

"Ah, there speaks the true artist," she smiled. "And after dinner, would you like to nap or possibly go on a drive, oh dear," she made a little face, "the coachman is not well today . . ."

"I'm sorry to hear it," I said, "but I don't really want to go on a drive. I'd much prefer to walk about the grounds, if I might. It seems to be a nice day."

"It's a lovely day," she agreed. "I'm very partial to fall weather. I think a walk would be the very thing. You need exercise, too, after all those hours at the piano. I'd join you, but I have so much to do. Agnes Sykes arrived this morning and I'm putting her right to work. The house was shockingly neglected in my absence and, of course, being so short-handed. . . . That Nancy'd better not give my name as a reference. Of course, I don't think she'd dare."

"I dreamed about Nancy last night," I said.

"About Nancy?" She raised her eyebrows. "But how very unusual, my dear. It seems extremely odd that you'd dream about someone you've never seen."

I explained my dream and she listened attentively. "Strange," she commented finally. "I shall have to get my dream book and see what it means."

"Your . . . dream book?" I repeated.

She laughed, "Oh, my, I shouldn't have mentioned it. You will think I am a foolish woman—and you will say it is because I am a foreigner. You will be quite right, of course. In Brasso there are many old beliefs which linger on. The peasants are extremely superstitious and since we recruit our household servants as well as our wet nurses from their ranks, you might say that we imbibe their fancies with our foster-mother's milk. You will find us throwing spilled salt over our left shoulders and consulting dream books. Mine is very old and it is full of gypsy lore. Many generations back there was a gypsy who married one of my ancestors. Perhaps it was from her that my Jonathan inherited his love for the violin."

"A gypsy," I said, "how exciting."

"Exciting?" She raised her eyebrows again. "Do you base your fondness for gypsies on Balfe's opera *The Bohemian Girl* or upon Herr Strauss's *The Gypsy Baron*? Neither of these lovely little works gives you any impression of the real gypsy. They are a strange, wild people, savage, cruel . . . and some say, damned." Her eyes were somber and she looked beyond me into space. Then she laughed, a hard, mirthless sound which echoed unpleasantly through the corridor. "But I was talking about dreams . . . and if I find anything in my dream book that approximates your dream, I shall tell you."

"I shall be extremely interested to hear about it," I said politely, wondering how a woman of her intelligence could give credence to such balderdash.

She laughed again, and this time there was genuine merriment in her voice. "You will not be interested, not at all. You are thinking that I am very silly to consult such a book. Ah, now you are blushing! I am right, yes? Until you learn to school your features, my poor Barbary, you must never think that which you do not want to say out loud."

As she stopped speaking, I heard the notes of a bell. "That must be dinner," I said thankfully.

"And you are very, very glad of the diversion, yes?" she asked archly.

"I am truly hungry," I said, privately determining to practice inscutable looks in front of my mirror that very afternoon!

Dinner was excellent, but extremely filling. There were seven courses, starting with a mock-turtle soup; then, there was trout, followed by venison with mushrooms. I was given my choice of tenderloin or lobsters, I took the latter and then, there were peas and potatoes and artichokes, stuffed with smoked salmon, and salad, and cakes, and ice cream. There were also various kinds of wine. I mention the menu because I had never tasted anything so delicious nor had I ever eaten or drunk so much. My own excuse is that I was tantalized by the odors and the appearance of the dishes. In addition to being a superb cook, the temperamental lady of the range was also an artist!

Two hours later, when I finally left the table, I was feeling dizzy and more inclined to nap than to walk, but in the interests of clearing my head, I told Mrs. Weir that I still intended to view the gardens.

"Very well, my dear, but I hope you'll stay in the gardens," she cautioned. "It's easy to get lost otherwise."

I was surprised. "But I had no intention of leaving the gardens," I told her, wishing that my eyelids did not feel so weighted.

"Are you sure you wouldn't rather rest?" she demanded solicitously.

Her penchant for reading my mind or my face was proving disconcerting and annoying. "Oh, no," I assured her, "I am quite in the mood to go outside."

Once I came out, I found myself very glad that I had made that decision. As she had said, it was a lovely fall day and though it was warm, there was a tang in the air and the sun's light was more yellow than orange. A little breeze was stirring and when I started down one of the

garden paths, a shower of dying leaves drifted gently to the ground. For the most part, however, the trees were still richly green and the hedges had not yet acquired that dusty look they get later in the year.

In keeping with the luxury, if not the beauty of the architectural design of the house, the garden was laid out in fancy patterns; borders had been cut to swirl around flower beds and there were circles and squares bisected by graveled walks. In the center of the garden, there was a large fountain in which a marble nymph tipped an unceasing stream of water from her vase. At the end of one path, I saw a marble folly, four pillars holding up a wrought iron dome; a small semi-circular bench was set between each pillar. It was a charming effect, but it would have been more charming if there had been a pool to reflect it, as there usually was in ornamental gardens. Then, as I came closer to it, I saw something that surprised me, a deep, round depression grown over with young vines, suggesting to me that there once had been a pool there and not very long since. I wondered why it had been drained. Obviously, it had been Mrs. Weir's decision and somehow, it did not seem in keeping with what I knew about her. Her dress, her manner, even the furnishings of her home suggested a love for the romantic and surely a reflecting pool was a most romantic addition to a garden. Still I remembered Papa's disgusted comments about the fish pond at Clinton House.

"It's a breeding place for mosquitoes. Just look into the water and you'll see millions of their nymphs—and lose your blood to them come summer."

There had also been snakes in the pond, harmless, but large, black and startling—at least one had startled me on a morning when I had found it in the grass looking like a huge length of pipe until it wriggled away and splashed into the water. I grimaced. I hated snakes. Then, I sighed. Snakes or not, I was missing Clinton House again. I wished I were home. I wished it strongly enough to come

out of the garden and walk around to the front of the house. The curving driveway, followed, would lead to the gates and beyond the gates were the woods and beyond the woods, the fields and beyond them . . . home.

I was hardly aware of what I was doing when I started walking around the driveway. My head had ceased to function; my brains were in my feet and they were leading me away from Weir Hall. I walked quickly; in fact, I was almost running and there was something inside of me that kept urging me forward, away from that gaunt red house with its beautiful furnishings, its magnificent piano and its captive prince.

"Away . . . away from the castle," I muttered as I came in sight of a pair of tall wrought-iron gates. I ran all the way up to them and reached out to push them open, but they were locked and the shock of the cold iron against my palms helped me retrieve my scattered senses. I wondered at the panic that had sent me there. Filaments of it, like the wisps of a torn spider web, still clung to the corners of my mind. If the gates had been open, I should have run through them into the dense wood . . . "the haunted Woodland of Weir," I laughed shakily and then, I wondered about the gatekeeper. Had he seen my headlong dash and would he tell Mrs. Weir about it? I glanced at the gatehouse, which was, I found, a small red replica of the main house, half-hidden between two large fir trees. The windows it turned on me were blank, blind, I thought with a little shudder—not liking it any better than the hall.

"Why were you running?"

"Oh!" I gasped, looking around. Someone, a man, had spoken, but I didn't see him near the gatehouse.

"You oughtn't to run in those heavy clothes. I don't know why you women will wear those pinched-in waists and those skirts that make you all look like great tea cosies." So speaking, a tall, fair, young man in a rusty black suit stepped out of a thicket by the side of the road beyond the gates.

"Oh, oh, you startled me!" I panted.

"You shouldn't have been running," he repeated sternly. "Was something chasing you?"

"No, I . . . I was just exercising," I said, feeling foolish.

"Those gowns were never meant for exercise. They're supposed to be decorative." He gave me another look. "They can be when worn by a beauty, but you'd look even lovelier in a Grecian tunic and certainly your movements would be freer."

I didn't know what to say. His frankness was disarming but, at the same time, it was embarrassing me. "The Grecian ladies," I said severely, "were not very modest, sir."

"On the contrary, they were exceptionally modest," he contradicted. "And they were fortunate enough to live in a civilization which, rather than being revolted by the body, held it in high esteem and treated it accordingly. But that's aside from the point I wish to make at this present moment. My name's Roger Quarry, Dr. Quarry, to be exact, and you are, I believe, a guest of Lady Weir?"

"*Lady Weir?*"

"The Lady of the Manor, I ought to say. The lovely Magda has always given that impression to us humble folk who dwell beyond her gates. It's to compensate for being a foreigner, I expect."

"I don't know if I should let you speak that way about my hostess," I felt obliged to tell him.

"Then, I was correct in my diagnosis. She's your hostess and you're her guest. Do you have a name besides 'Guest?' "

I could not quite swallow my laugh. "It's Barbary Clinton."

"Barbary . . ." he mused. "I've heard of Barbary pirates."

"So had my grandfather, Captain Crowne," I said. "I was supposed to be Barbara but . . ." I told him the story.

"And have you had a life of excitement?" he inquired when I finished.

"Not yet." I sighed.

He smiled. "You needn't sound so doleful, Miss Clinton. You're very young. I predict you'll have a most exciting life."

"I'm nearly twenty-three," I said.

"Really? I should've thought you much younger, but it doesn't matter. I shan't alter my prediction." His smile vanished and he looked at me very intently out of light, but piercing blue eyes. "You'll have seen my friend John, perhaps?" he questioned.

"Jonathan Weir?" I inquired.

"Yes, I wish he'd come to see me. I live just beyond the woods. It's hard for me to get up here, I've so many calls to make, but I had a free moment today. That's why I'm here. Unfortunately, the gatekeeper's not about and if he were, I expect he wouldn't let me in. Still, I keep hoping the injunction will be lifted."

"The . . . injunction?"

"Against my examining him. His mother won't allow it. I don't understand her. Jon and I have been friends all our lives and I might be able to help him."

"His mother says nothing can help him. He has some sort of a disease."

"Melancholia," he defined, adding with a trace of anger, "she chooses to believe there's no hope for him, but I don't accept absolutes. There've been great strides made in treating such illnesses—I know that from my own experience. I've studied under Charcot at the Salpêtrière clinic in France. They specialize in nervous diseases and there are treatments such as hypnosis which have worked exceptionally well in these cases."

"Did you tell her that?"

He nodded grimly, "I told her all that, but *still* she refuses to let me see him. As I've explained, that's why I'm here today . . . in the hopes that I might meet him.

I've been here on many occasions, but . . .” he shrugged, “I've been unsuccessful.”

“He doesn't stir out of his rooms in the daytime, I understand,” I said.

“But he's not bedridden, is he?”

“No, I caught a glimpse of him in the hall last night.”

“He didn't speak to you?”

“No.”

Dr. Quarry shook his head. “He must be melancholy indeed. In the old days, Jon could not have resisted . . . but that doesn't matter. If you should see him and he should speak to you, mention my name. Tell him I can help him. Tell him to come to my house, it doesn't matter what time—it can be any hour, day or night. Will you give him that message?”

“Yes, I shall,” I said, “but his mother said he'd been to see specialists in Vienna.”

One of his eyebrows shot up. “They are not the last word, because they reside in Vienna, my dear Miss Clinton,” he said with a touch of hauteur.

“I didn't mean that,” I said hastily. “I only wanted to let you know what she told me.”

“I'm sorry.” He gave me a reassuring smile. “I shouldn't have taken exception so hastily, but I am quite aware that she does believe she had had the last and ultimate word . . .” He paused, looking at me searchingly. “I've a favor to ask of you, Miss Clinton, which I hope you'll not take amiss.”

“What is that?”

“I'd prefer you didn't mention our conversation to Mrs. Weir. If you feel you can give my message to Jon, do it, privately, please.”

“Well, I will . . .” I began dubiously, “but . . .”

“Please,” he repeated urgently, “it will do him no harm if I merely examine him.”

“I shouldn't think so, myself,” I agreed.

"Good," he said, then looking up over my head, he frowned and muttered, "not a word, I beg you."

Turning, I saw Mrs. Weir hurrying toward us, her eyes full of anger. "Dr. Quarry," she panted, as she came to stand beside me. "What is this?"

"A friendly conversation with your charming guest, Mrs. Weir," he said with an edge of sarcasm to his tones.

She ignored his explanation. "I've told you that Jonathan will not see you. Why are you so persistent?"

"I want to help him," he said stubbornly.

"And I have told you that your . . . medical skills are not required, Dr. Quarry," she said with a contempt so icy and so hurtful that I winced. "Now . . . you will please not come where you are not wanted."

He bowed and quite as if she had not spoken, he said easily, "I bid you good afternoon, Miss Clinton. It was a great pleasure to make your acquaintance and I hope we shall have the opportunity of seeing each other again, soon." Turning, he went off down the road, whistling.

Mrs. Weir glared after his retreating figure. "Such insolence!" she exclaimed. Whirling on me she added, "What were you doing . . . talking to that . . . that man?"

Remembering her ability to read my face, I summoned up my best surprised expression and said coolly, "I met him as I was walking down here. He seemed very pleasant. He said he was a friend of your son's."

"A friend?" she snorted. "A drinking companion . . . trying to involve my boy in all sorts of dissipations and now, to have the temerity to come here, when I have expressly forbidden him . . . it passes all understanding."

"But he said he wanted to help him," I reminded her.

"Help him? How could he help him? How could this country doctor succeed where the greatest medical minds of the century have failed? But enough, I waste my time talking about him. I hope, my dear, that he was respectful to you?"

"R-Respectful?" I questioned, having no need to simulate my surprise. "Of course he was, most respectful."

Her smile was not pleasant. "I should not have asked. I had forgotten there was an iron gate between you. If there had not been such a barrier, you might have had a different tale to tell."

"A different . . . tale?"

"One had best not inquire too deeply into the reasons that young reprobate . . . Quarry became a doctor. However, I imagine that there is more than one young woman who could tell you about his intentions or . . . attentions, but enough, I am sure you can guess what I mean. If you can't, it's only because you are such an innocent."

"I do understand," I said slowly, "but you surprise me. He seems so well-spoken."

"He's studied that art more closely than he has studied his medical books, I am sure." She laughed, then added seriously, "It's a pity that you decided to roam so far afield. You might have been spared this encounter."

I flushed. "I . . . actually didn't know I was walking in this direction. I . . . I was thinking. I know you cautioned me to stay within limits of the gardens . . ."

"Oh, my dear," she said quickly, "I'm not chiding you. You are not limited to a certain prescribed area. You may go where you choose. I was only thinking of your possible confusion. I certainly didn't expect you to meet Dr. Quarry. . . . Would you like to come back to the house with me? Or do you still prefer to stroll by yourself?"

"Oh, no, I'll come back," I said hastily.

"Good. Perhaps you would like to rest . . . or would you rather practice?"

"I think I'd like to practice," I said.

"Excellent," she said approvingly. "And from time to time . . . I will creep to your door and listen."

"You are welcome to come in," I said.

"Oh, no," she demurred almost humbly. "Practicing

must be done alone. I have that on the very best authority . . . my son."

Once back at the piano, I did not launch immediately into one of my favorite works; instead, I began to play some of Czerny's Daily Exercises and as my fingers went through these mechanical motions, I thought about my meeting with Dr. Quarry.

It was an encounter which confused and disturbed me. I had liked him on sight. He had seemed earnest, honest and truly concerned over the plight of his friend. Certainly, he had not seemed the sort of a man who would take advantage of a defenseless young woman or indulge in clandestine intimacies with his patients. However, I did recall his admiring comments on my person. Had they been in the nature of an advance? I had a sudden vivid memory of my struggles with Orville Newton. Would there have been a repetition of that episode if the gates had been open? In spite of Mrs. Weir's dire warnings, I found that very hard to believe.

During our conversation, he had suggested that he did not like her. Did his prejudice against her arise from the fact that he was aware of her own feelings concerning him? She had contended that he was not a fit companion for her son. She had derided his medical abilities. Did she speak from certain knowledge or was she, herself, prejudiced? I found myself strongly inclined toward the latter viewpoint. Was this because I, myself, cherished mixed feelings about her? And what about the message he had begged me to deliver to Jonathan Weir?

Should I find a way to communicate it to him? Such an action would be very disloyal to my hostess, and given her estimate of Dr. Quarry's medical prowess, what purpose would I be serving? However, suppose he could help his friend? I had heard of the hypnosis treatment from my father, who had subscribed to several foreign journals, among them scientific and medical papers. He had told me

that hypnotism had been proved remarkably effective in treating cases of hysteria. Might not melancholy be a sort of hysteria in reverse?

Yet, if I told Jonathan about Dr. Quarry's entreaties, he might well condemn me for interfering and betray me to his mother, which would mean the end of my visit and of my hopes concerning Professor Steinholz. That, however, was a very selfish attitude. . . . With a sigh, I brought my fingers down on the keyboard with a little crash. The resulting discord, I decided, expressed my own confusion very aptly. In self-defense, I abandoned my complicated speculations and Czerny, too, turning gratefully to a Chopin nocturne.

As usual, the hours sped by and when I finally emerged from the music room, the long shadows of late afternoon had dimmed the hallway, but the sinking sun still provided enough light for me to get a closer look at the portraits that lined it on either side.

I started with those nearest to the music room. These were the Georgian and Regency groups; some of the faces were plump and affable under their powdered wigs or their short Napoleonic haircuts, but for the most part, they had the stern, closed appearance I had found in the visage of Gideon Weir. Many of the women were haughty looking, an expression that sat ill on features that bespoke a plebian or "good honest American" origin.

A little further down, I found a group dating from the time of my parents' youth, about 1840, and then I saw a large portrait—that of a young woman in a low-cut golden gown. Her appearance was so different from that of the other pictured women that she reminded me of a peacock in a canary cage. Where they had worn a ring or a bracelet or a necklace, she was decked out in masses of heavy gold jewelry—great bracelets encircled her arms and there were knuckle-touching rings on every fingers. Filigree earrings almost reached her shoulders and there were pearls twisted

through her blue-black ringlets. Her eyes, which were as dark as her hair, had a boldness to them and from the way she stared out from the portrait, I had the impression that she must have been trying to mesmerize the artist. She was certainly beautiful, but I had an uncomfortable feeling that she was greedy for all the riches life had to offer.

"Ah, you have found me."

Startled, I pivoted about to find Mrs. Weir standing behind me, also gazing at the portrait. I realized at that same moment that it was indeed she who was depicted in the painting.

"It . . . it's a lovely picture," I said, a little hesitantly, wondering if "lovely" was the adjective I really wanted.

"It is lovely," she agreed complacently, "but also it is sad. I was such an innocent, when my father had that portrait commissioned, so full of hope, so intense . . . don't I look intense?"

"Very," I agreed heartily, glad that I was able to be truthful; if she had stopped with the description "innocent," my tell-tale face might have betrayed me. Whatever else she had been as a young girl, I did not believe she had ever been an innocent.

"I think Basil . . . my husband, fell in love with that painting before he fell in love with me. Tibor, my brother, knew him in Germany and brought him to stay with us. I used to come down the hall and find him standing in front of it—all eyes. Have you seen Basil's portrait?"

"No, I don't think so. Of course, I haven't been reading the names beneath."

"No matter, he is over here." Moving across the hall, she beckoned to me. "Come."

Obediently, I saw that she was indicating the portrait of a handsome young man, who looked vaguely familiar to me. Then, I realized that he resembled the portrait in the library—Jonathan Weir. Together, his parents had given him the best of their features.

"See how fair he was, then," she said softly. "His hair

was as golden as yours and his eyes as blue, though I think there's a tinge of green in yours." She stared at the picture. "He was very beautiful. I remember saying so to my father." She laughed. "How he snarled at me. 'Men are not beautiful, Magda. Men must be strong like great mountain bears!' "

Her face changed, there was a faraway look in her eyes and almost a softness in them, too. "He was a mountain bear . . . like so many in the family. Bold, cruel . . . do you know that he kidnapped my mother and bore her off to his hunting lodge in the forest? Nearly six months, he held her there. At first it was against her will. He had the scars of her anger on his face and body all his life. But when at last he released her, she had ceased to be angry—and when her own father, with his two strong, furious sons came to claim her and kill her abductor, she proudly pointed to her swelling belly and told him she was with child. That is how I was conceived—out of great hate and great love.

"When my beautiful little American asked my father for my hand in marriage, he laughed a long time. 'Magda is not for you,' he bellowed. 'My daughter is a bride for an Almos or a Zapolya, only those of the warrior breed, only a tyrant could tame her. You are too gentle, too kind to lie with a tigress!' " Her face darkened. "His words frightened Basil. Suddenly, he found he had business in Pesth. Oh, how my father laughed, when he told him he would leave.

"However, on the night before his departure, I came to his room. I wore a long velvet robe and I had loosened my hair . . . it fell to my hips. I stood in front of him and I said, 'Are you afraid of me, my beautiful American?' Before he could answer, I let my robe slip down over my shoulders, over my breasts, down to the floor and there was nothing about me save my hair. He stood like a statue, while I locked my two arms around his neck and pulled his

face against my breasts. I repeated, 'Are you afraid of me, Basil, my beautiful?' "

"And then the statue came alive and bore me to the floor; that night his hot seed filled me and took root and grew into my wonderful son. Thus . . . Jonathan was conceived out of another great love. Ah, there was never such a night again, though we lay together many times thereafter . . . because his fear returned and he became tentative and wary of me. My father was right, I needed a man of a warrior breed! But still I had my lovely son." She looked at me and then she shook her head. "Oh, I think I have shocked you, my little dove. You know nothing of such matters, do you? The great passions, they are not for the sons and daughters of the Puritans, not even those in whose veins flow the blood of witches. Yet, you are an artist, and an artist should reach the heights but also he should grovel in the depths, for unless you know what it is to be burned in the white flames of Hell . . ." She paused suddenly and then she said apologetically, "Ah, you must not listen to me. You must forget what I told you. Your shy little virginal ears were never meant for such confessions. Will you forgive me, poor little bird?"

"Yes, of . . . of course," I stammered. "It . . . it was very interesting . . . how . . . how you met your husband."

Laughter came welling out of her, deep laughter. "Interesting, was it? Good, I am glad that it has proved interesting, child. Now . . . would you like me to show you the other portraits? . . ."

"No," I said quickly, "I think I will rest a bit before supper."

"A fine idea," she smiled. "Again, you were a long time at the piano. I think that all your passion is centered in the piano, but that should not be. The piano is of the feminine gender . . . she lies on her back and opens herself for a man, but what am I saying? It is nonsense, Barbary, and you must forget it. I am in an odd mood. They do not come often."

"I—I see," I said, embarrassed at my own embarrassment. "Well, I . . . I think I'll lie down."

"Would you like a cup of tea and a few cakes to tide you over until supper?" she asked.

"No, nothing, thank you," I said, wanting to get away from her, wanting to understand the strange feelings she had aroused in me. My heart seemed to be pounding, even bounding in my bosom and there was a pulse beating in my throat, as well.

"As you choose," she smiled. "Have your rest, my dear."

Once in my room, I did not rest. I could not. Her stories were in my mind. I was shocked and frightened. I had never heard anyone speak about love in such a manner, in any manner! It was not a subject which was discussed. It was not genteel! Even as that word arose in my mind, I had to laugh. Magda Weir was not "genteel," either. She had nothing in common with the ladies I had known at home. She was another breed, a savage! I remembered what she had told me about the gypsy who had married one of her ancestors. I had no trouble crediting that tale. I could believe almost any wickedness about her. I paused in my thinking. Being descended from a gypsy did not necessarily mean that a person was wicked, but she was. I was sure of it. There was something unwholesome about her. I did not like being around her, nor did I need to be!

"But there's Professor Steinholz," a part of my mind whispered. "It doesn't matter," I answered. "I want to get away."

I would tell her at once, I decided. No, I would not tell her. I did not want to listen to her procrastinations and her apologies. She would try and overwhelm me with them. She would insist and I would give in. Out of politeness, I would agree to stay.

I thought of Dr. Quarry and wished I knew where he lived. If I could leave now and get to his house, he could

drive me to the train station, or I could hire a coach. I looked out of the window and regretted the hours I had spent at the piano: Since it was nearly dark, I would have to wait until the following day. I would go early, before anyone was awake. I would not burden myself with luggage. Once I was back home, I would send for my clothes.

Oh, I was so relieved, once I had evolved my plan. It only remained for me to get through the evening. I frowned. It would not be easy to keep the exultation I was feeling out of my face, but I would make the effort.

It took great effort. Mrs. Weir was most subdued and extremely apologetic for what she termed her "dreadful outburst." Her manner that night was as dignified and "genteel," as anyone could wish. However, I was still determined to leave Weir Hall. Not even the beautiful piano could shake my resolve. I was regretful only about Professor Steinholz, but the idea of returning to Clinton House took precedence.

I bade my hostess a fulsome goodnight, hoping that my smiles would be interpreted as gratitude for another delicious supper and the chance to play the piano for, what she could not know, was the last time. Needless to say, my playing did not bring her son forth from his lair, wherever that was. I did feel a twinge of regret at my inability to convey Dr. Quarry's message to him, but perhaps he might be able to find another way to see his friend. Knowing his dislike for Mrs. Weir, I was sure he would not condemn me for mine.

When I returned to my chamber, I put a few necessities in a small satchel and went to bed, happier than I had been since I had set foot in Weir Hall. With a little shock, I realized that I had spent only twenty-four hours at the house. It seemed much longer.

That night, I had another dream. It was an odd one—even odder than the one I had had the previous evening.

Again, it seemed very real. It took place in the middle of the night, or so I thought. I felt a rush of cold air and I had the impression that I awakened to find the window across from me swinging wide. I had not opened it before retiring. I hurried to shut it and as I did, I heard a voice below in the garden. "Rapunzel . . . Rapunzel . . ." it called. "Let down your hair."

Looking down, I saw a man standing below, staring up at me. Yet, how could I have seen him so clearly in that velvety darkness, a darkness lighted only by the light from the three-quarter moon? It had to be a dream. Even his voice was dream-like, a soft, seductive whisper, borne up to me on the night winds.

"Rapunzel . . . Rapunzzzzelllll . . . let down your hair."

In my dream, I nervously touched my hair and found it braided tightly for the night. Closing the window, I went back to bed. As I settled myself down in its silken softness, the window banged open again. Then, I was aware of a weight on me, as if something were pressing me down. I tried to push it away, but it was impossible. I was pinioned beneath something . . . someone! With a thrill of terror, I realized that there was a man lying across me. I struggled again, but I was no match against his hard strength. I felt his lips on mine. I tried to move away, but to no avail. My mouth felt bruised, but at the same time I was aware that I must be dreaming and so I waited and finally the embrace ended.

Then, the covers were pulled back and I felt his hands on me, slipping beneath my night-dress, stroking my bare flesh gently. I made a futile effort to push those hands away, but again, I was unsuccessful. The caressing continued and delicious little shivers began to course up and down my body. I was terribly frightened and yet, at the same time, an excitement I had never known before flowed through me, little moans of pleasure began to escape from me. I made an effort to subdue them, but I had no control

over my voice, or over my body. His hands were in my hair, now, loosening my braids.

"Rapunzel . . . Rapunzel . . ." he whispered ardently. My hair was soon falling loosely around my shoulders. He buried his face in it. Then, he was unbuttoning my night-dress, slipping it down over my shoulders. "Rapunzel . . ." he whispered once more and I felt his lips at my throat.

For a moment, I was seized by an icy fear for which I had no name. I only knew that I was in danger, terrible danger! I began to struggle and managed to thrust my foe back, only to have a pair of iron hands push me back down, pinioning me to the mattress. I sobbed and continued my desperate attempt to evade his seeking mouth. "No, no, no," I moaned, "you mustn't . . . mustn't . . ." Yet, even as I protested, I did not know what I was forbidding.

"Hush, Rapunzel . . ." he commanded. His mouth was on my lips silencing me. He slipped his arm under my shoulders, lifting me against him. He kissed my throat again and then his lips traveled gently to my neck. I felt a stab of agonizing pain and cried out loudly, but then something infinitely pleasurable assuaged the hurt, a softness that fastened on the assaulted spot and gently drew the pain away.

He began to kiss me again and I found my fear of him was gone. I had no wish to struggle, not even when it seemed to me that every inch of my body was being gently touched and explored. I lay still, welcoming the caresses. Then, suddenly the pressure was gone and the dream ended. I, finding myself awake and alone in my bed, wept with disappointment and buried my face in my pillows, hoping or rather praying that I might soon sleep and dream again.

I awakened early the next morning to find my bed tumbled and my hair loosened from the tight braids of the

previous night. I was surprised, for generally I was not a restless sleeper. I also found that I was not feeling particularly well. There was a throbbing at my temples and though the room was chilly, I was warm and feverish. I groaned, recognizing my symptoms all too well. I had caught cold.

However, my resolve to leave the house remained unchanged. I glanced at the clock on my night-table and saw that it was a little before six. I hoped that the downstairs would be as deserted as it had been yesterday morning. Still, if a servant were to see me as I crept down the stairs, I could always say that I was taking an early morning stroll. As for my satchel, I could hide that under the cloak I would be carrying over my arm.

Slipping out of bed, I started toward the dressing room, but midway to my goal, I was forced to stop because the throbbing in my head had turned into pounding and the room was going around me in circles. It was all I could do to stagger back to the bed. Once I was flat on my back, my dizziness subsided, but it left me feeling nauseated and swallowing air bubbles in my throat. I was hardly in the condition to take a long walk. I could have wept with frustration. Then, I decided I would still try and make the effort. I did not want to stay at Weir Hall, not if I could possibly help it. I sat up again, and again the room circled around me. Sulkily, I slipped back down under the covers and presently I fell asleep.

It was a minute or two past ten when I awakened the second time. Much to my relief, I felt considerably better, but, of course, leaving Weir Hall was out of the question. I could only hope that my problem was temporary. However, there were spots in front of my eyes; that frightened me, until I realized that I was staring out of the window into the sunlight. It seemed very bright, much brighter than yesterday. I would have to draw the blinds. I got out of bed and found that at least the room stayed stationary. Going to the window, I was about to draw the blinds,

when a glance into the garden brought me a memory of my dream.

I blushed all over my body. I have no trouble tracing its source. Undoubtedly, Mrs. Weir's strange story had sent it into my mind. It had certainly made an impression on me for my dream had been exceptionally vivid. I wondered about the man who had made love to me. Had he been Brian or Orville Newton? It didn't seem to me that he could have been either man. Perhaps he had been Dr. Quarry. My cheeks burned. There was something shameful, even sinful in imagining such an experience in a dream. More than ever, I longed to get away from the house. I hated the place. The idea of spending even another hour within its ugly red walls was loathsome to me and I had to face twenty-four more of them! Possibly, since I did feel so much better, I might yet be able to leave the grounds and find someone who could guide me to Dr. Quarry's house.

With a little twinge of surprise, I realized that in addition to the help I hoped to receive from him, I was also anxious to see him again. A vision of his clean-cut good looks arose in my mind. He reminded me a little of Brian, but he had his own attraction, too. Furthermore, he had seemed to like me, too. By the time I was dressed, I was determined to get to him—and as soon as I could find the way.

Alas, for the "best-laid plans of mice and men." Mine were changed by my hostess. When I came downstairs, I found her waiting in the hall. She was wearing an elaborate walking dress and a smart feathered bonnet was clamped on her dark curls. "Ah, here you are!" she exclaimed. "You slept late this morning, and it has agreed with you. You look most refreshed."

"I feel refreshed," I said.

"Good, good, good," she replied in her expansive way. "Now, you must eat breakfast, it is waiting for you."

Afterwards, I hope you will not want to practice. Indeed, you must not. It is a fine morning and I have a surprise for you."

"A surprise?" I questioned and, for some reason I could not fathom, my heart plummeted.

"Yes, we are going to drive to Salem. You've not seen the city, have you?"

"No," I answered, wishing I might have given her an affirmative.

"Very good," she clapped her hands. "We shall have a lovely outing and dinner at a beautiful little cafe overlooking the water. Also, I will show you some points of interest in the town. There is the harbor and there is the Witch House . . . also there is the home that my friend, Nat Hawthorne, described in his book, *The House of Seven Gables*. I don't think I've told you that Nat was a good friend of Basil's. My poor husband was devastated, quite devastated when he died. As it happens, he himself died only two years later. But I did not mean to speak of such dismal matters. You'll find Salem much to your liking, I promise you."

"I'm sure I shall," I said reluctantly, wishing I might refuse her invitation, but for politeness's sake, I could not. With an assumption of enthusiasm, I added, "I've always wanted to visit it."

I did not visit it that morning. Once in the carriage, the motion made me feel very queasy again, and there was one horrid moment when I was sure I would faint. Mrs. Weir, who had been talking about Hawthorne and his ancestors, the Hathornes, suddenly stopped mid-sentence and looked at me intently. "My dear child," she said, "I don't think you feel well. Would you prefer to turn back? Fortunately, we are not yet so far from home."

I started to shake my head, but that proved to be an error, because then I became very ill. It was necessary for the coachman to stop by the side of the road, while I fled into the shrubbery where, to my intense mortification, I lost my breakfast.

Mrs. Weir was all concern. Ignoring my agonized apologies, she brought me water-soaked cloths for, fortunately, she had found a stream nearby. "You'll need to go back to bed," she said solicitously, as she dabbed my face. "I'll have Agnes bring you up a big bowl of chicken broth and then you can sleep. Sleep is the best healer in the world."

Despite my dislike for the house, I was only too glad when I finally saw its outlines through the trees, glad, too, to get back to my room. Once I was undressed and in bed, I didn't even wait for the promised broth, I fell asleep immediately and I didn't awaken until twilight.

I had to agree with Mrs. Weir's dictum on the healing properties of sleep, for I felt much better. A tentative walk across the room to the bathroom proved I no longer suffered any of the queasiness of the morning; all my earlier symptoms had vanished and I was eager to be up and about.

I took a long bath and a shower as well, then I put on one of my favorite gowns, a violet poplin, which had been copied from a model pictured in Harper's Bazaar. Since it was a mourning costume, it was very plain as to style, its only decoration being its satin sash and some scalloped trimming on the skirt. However, where the Bazaar dress had been buttoned to the throat, my dressmaker had cut mine lower. As I stood in front of my mirror in the dressing room, fastening the buttons of my bodice, I found I had two little bluish blemishes on the side of my neck. I could not imagine how I had gotten them. I decided I must have pricked myself with a pin. I didn't like the looks of them; to my mind, they marred my white skin. However, I was able to cover them with a broad purple velvet ribbon which proved, I thought, a most becoming addition. In fact, I was conscious of looking my very best that evening. I had arranged my hair in elaborate puffs and swirls and braids and there was a delicate pink flush on my cheeks. My eyes seemed more brilliant than usual and I was glad of it. I wanted to look well that night, though I could not understand quite why, since there would be no one to see

me save Mrs. Weir. Then, I thought of Dr. Quarry again and wished fervently that he were on better terms with my hostess.

It was odd, the impression he had made on me. Since my experience with Orville Newton, I had been very much on my guard with men. Yet, if it had been Dr. Quarry who had pressed his attentions on me, I wondered if I would have struggled so furiously. A vision arose in my mind. I saw myself in his arms, felt his long surgeon's fingers caressing me, felt his mouth against my throat, my breasts. My lips were parting to receive his kisses, my heart was beating faster. I felt hot and cold all over. "Oh, God, Roger . . ." I groaned, running my hands down the sides of my bodice, "I need you . . . I need you."

Then, as those words resounded through my dressing room, I felt weak with shock. Never in my entire life, had I ever, ever had such fancies—such evil fancies! But that was not true, I realized, remembering my dream. I shuddered—what was happening to me? I stared into my mirror and found that I was blushing and small wonder, when I could imagine such horrid intimacies! I needed . . . for a moment, my mind was a complete blank and then I thought of the piano and realized with another shock that I had not had the slightest compulsion to practice that day—which was certainly unlike me. Of course, I had been ill. I wondered if I were not still a little feverish. That might explain my untoward thoughts. However, when I touched my forehead, I found it cool, which left me without an explanation and frightened. I had the odd sensation that I had lost some part of myself, but that, of course, was ridiculous and if Mama had been there to listen to these confidences, she would have said I was thinking about myself far too much.

Tears came to my eyes. I missed her so much, then, more than I ever had. She had been so sweet, so good, so wholesome. "*Barbary . . . Barbary, go, go, go, while there is still time!*"

I stiffened at the sound of that whispering voice, a voice that had been stilled in the waters of a swollen stream. Mama. Had I heard it in my head or my heart? "Mama!" I cried to the silence. "Is it you?"

There was a knock at my door. Hardly thinking, I rushed to open it and found Mrs. Weir standing outside. I was so cast down, I could have cried, but then, common sense came to my rescue. Obviously that whisper had been only another manifestation of my overworked imagination. "Good evening," I said politely.

"My dear girl, my very dear girl," she cried. "How well you are looking! And I came up to offer my sympathy to an invalid. But are you sure that you should be out of your bed?"

"Quite sure," I assured her. "I'm feeling much better."

"Oh, I am delighted!" she exclaimed. "I was so worried about you. I was even composing mental notes to your family, telling them that you had been taken ill, but I thought the disorder was slight—and here you are, blooming like a rose! Come down to supper, my dear. It's ready now."

Remembering my unfortunate experience of the morning, I said hesitantly, "I—I wonder if I should eat much."

"No, not too much," she said, "but I have had Mrs. Szalay prepare something light. I would have had Agnes bring it to you. I am sure you will find it to your liking."

In spite of her assurances, I was still a little wary when I sat down at the table, but the meal Mrs. Szalay had prepared was far too delicious to refuse. There was an excellent cream soup, delicately-flavored chicken, a small salad with an herb dressing and floating island for dessert. There was also a wonderful white wine which, Mrs. Weir said, came from Brasso. I didn't even need her urging to have two large glasses of it, which was more than I usually drank, but it was so good. I was a little embarrassed to find myself gulping it rather than sipping it.

I did feel a little tipsy when I arose from the table, but I also had a marvelous sense of well-being. I could hardly believe I had spent the greater part of the day either ill or asleep. At that particular moment, I wanted to run, to dance to sing, but when Mrs. Weir asked wistfully if I would come to the piano, I realized that that was what I wanted to do most of all. I was surprised that I had not thought of it myself.

When I sat down at the piano, Mrs. Weir said, "My dear, could you play something for me?"

"Of course," I answered, "what would you like?"

"It is this." Moving to the chest of music, she had shown me the night I had arrived, she took out some yellowed sheets of music. "One must handle these with great care," she said, as she put them on the stand in front of me. "They are very old. You see that they have been transcribed by hand. It was done at the request of my grandmother. It is a song. Would you take it amiss if I were to sing it? I am in the mood for it tonight. I am not often in the mood for singing, but tonight I am happy because you are not sick anymore."

"You . . . you are very kind," I murmured, feeling guilty because I still took no pleasure from her presence.

"I am not kind," she contradicted. "I like you. I do not like many people, especially the natives of these cold, unfriendly shores."

I felt worse than ever and I tried to sound enthusiastic as I said, "I like you, too."

"Do you?" There was a glint of amusement in her dark eyes. "I think you do not, child. I think you are repelled by me and even frightened because I am so unlike anyone you have ever known. I was wrong to speak to you as I did yesterday, poor little dove. I hope you will forgive me. I hope that one day, soon, you will begin to like me, also. Opinions can change, you know."

"I . . . I assure you," I began nervously.

"No, do not assure me of anything. You are not a liar in

your face. It is not necessary to like me, because I am fond of you. Perhaps I would not be so fond, if you were not such a great talent. I have always admired artists. I do not expect that they will admire me back. Now . . . that we understand each other, let us have our little musicale." She opened the music carefully. "It is not difficult, except in the rhythm, which you might find unusual. Are you sure that you will not mind accompanying me?"

"I'll be happy to accompany you," I replied. Looking at her, I realized that she had the bone structure of a singer, broad across the cheekbones and with that wide forehead.

Scanning the music, I found that the rhythms were a little odd. I also noted that the words of the song had been written in a strange script and in a language I did not know. "Is this Hungarian?" I asked.

"There are Hungarian words in it," she answered, "but the language is Romany, the tongue of the gypsies. Would you like to know what it means?" Before I could reply, she continued. "It is the plaint of a lonely young gypsy lad. 'I do not know my father, my mother is dead,' he cries. He has no friends and no beloved, he has only his violin. 'Yet, if I grieve,' he says, 'I play my violin and there is no grief. My violin,' he continues, 'has two friends, love and hunger . . . they follow me, a musician.'

"It is one of my favorite songs. I sang it over the cradle of my little son. Perhaps, if he hears it tonight, he will come and stand at the doors . . ." She went to the French windows, opening them wide. "It is a strange night. Do you not feel that it is? There is a ring of mist around the moon, perhaps it pressages bad weather, but tonight it is merely beautiful."

I felt a surge of disappointment and realized that I was still resolved to leave Weir Hall, but how might I leave in the rain? The ground would be muddy and the trees of the wood heavy with moisture. No one would be around and I would be unable to find the way to Roger's house.

She came back to stand in the curve of the piano. "Are you ready to play for me, my dear?"

"Quite ready," I said.

As she had told me, the work was not hard and I had no difficulty with the rhythm. My only problem was that I would have rather listened to her singing. Her voice was low, husky, and beautiful, a dark contralto which was singularly compelling, making the music even more haunting than it was. I was in the middle of the second verse, when I heard the tentative notes of a violin. Startled, I stopped playing and looking up, met her eyes.

"Play, play, play," she hissed fiercely, "continue to play!"

I obeyed and the notes of the violin grew stronger and then, through the French doors stepped a young man. A single glance showed me a face I knew from the library portrait, only now the violin he had been holding was under his chin, and his playing was so brilliant that though I still continued to accompany his mother, my fingers were moving mechanically as I listened to him and to her, her voice now exultant and richer than before.

Finally, our strange trio ended and for a moment she did not move. Then, she turned very slowly, saying gently as one speaks to someone who is ill, "I bid you welcome, my dear son."

There were hollows around his eyes and there was a bitter twist to his mouth, which I had not seen in the portrait. He gave her a stony look. "Good evening, Mother," he said.

She indicated me. "This is my . . . our guest, Miss Clinton," she said.

"Miss Clinton," he bowed slightly. "You are a fine pianist."

His voice was chill and his glance cold, but I found him singularly attractive, even though he did not look well. He was very pale and thinner than he had been when the portrait was painted and, having heard him play, I felt very

sorry for him. I spoke the entire truth when I said, "I wished I had not been playing, Mr. Weir. I should have preferred listening to you."

"And he has not even lifted his bow in such a long time," his mother murmured. "I think it was Miss Clinton who has inspired you, Jonathan."

If she had expected him to reply gallantly that it was her singing, she was disappointed, for he said with a smile that was perilously close to a grimace, "Perhaps it was. I must tell you, Miss Clinton, that your touch is remarkable."

"You have not really heard her," Mrs. Weir said. "Play something for him, Barbary, one of your wonderful Liszt or Chopin compositions."

"I shall . . . if I might hear more of the violin. Would you play again, please, Mr. Weir?"

"If you wish," he shrugged, "but as my mother has told you, I am much out of practice."

"I did not say you were out of practice," she protested.

"No matter, it is what you meant. You are not the only one who has the gift of reading faces, my dear Magda."

I was startled to hear him address his mother by her given name and even more startled by his attitude, which was very bitter, hinting at a long-cherished grievance. I wondered if it were a manifestation of his illness and then, Roger Quarry came to my mind again, but not because I yearned to see him. This time, I thought only of his message and I wished that Mrs. Weir was not present, for I longed to deliver it. Then, even as that hope sped across my mind, she said, "Oh, my poor Jonathan, if only you understood me."

There was something cold, even malignant in his eyes as he faced her. "But I do understand you, Magda," he said.

I felt very uncomfortable and I longed to leave them, but just as I was on the point of slipping off the bench, she said, wearily, "Ah, what is the use of arguing. You have made up your mind. Very well, I shall remove my un-

wanted presence and leave you with Miss Clinton, whose company I am sure you will find more to your liking." She flashed a hard smile at me. "My dear Barbary, as you can see, my son is in one of his moods. Perhaps you can coax him out of it." She walked swiftly from the room.

I did not know what to say. I was extremely embarrassed. No one in my circle had ever engaged in private quarrels before a stranger. Then, in the midst of my confusion, he laughed, though not pleasantly.

"You must forgive my mother," he said. "She has never become civilized."

In spite of my dislike for Mrs. Weir, I remembered the anguish in her voice when she had told me about her son's malady and I felt compelled to defend her. "She's very worried about you," I said.

"At least, she would like to give that impression," he sneered.

His manner was so unpleasant that I was almost impelled to follow Mrs. Weir's example and leave the room, but something made me stay and continue my defense, "No," I said earnestly, "I know it to be the truth."

"You know nothing about it," he replied roughly. "You, with your innocence beaming from your face." He actually glared at me. "Why are you here? Why did you come? You ought to go . . . go at once, far, far away."

I knew he was warning me about something, but I was not in a mood to heed it. "Far . . . far away," I murmured, "from the castle that lies East of the sun and West of the moon."

He tensed. "What was that?" he demanded.

I felt foolish, I didn't know why I had said it. "It . . . it's from a fairy story, I read once. I can't think why I . . ."

"East of the sun and West of the Moon . . ." he interrupted. "I know that story, too. I read it when I was little." His expression had changed and he was more like the young man in the portrait. "The prince . . . and the

trolls." Suddenly there was a somber look in his eyes and a sadness about him that made me sorry for him, though I was not sure why.

"I used to believe in them when I was younger," I laughed, hoping he would find me ridiculous and laugh, too.

His gaze lingered on my face. "But of course, you are grown into a great girl, now, and you don't believe in such things anymore."

"Of course not," I averred.

He moved closer to me, bending over me and speaking in a low voice, "You should be . . . warned." He put his hand on my arm, then, he paused, frowning. "But I am talking . . . nonsense!" He moved back from me, laughing lightly, "And you've promised to play for me."

His abrupt change of mood was startling, but I decided it was probably another symptom of his illness. Yet, I was heartened by his laughter. At least, he wasn't depressed all the time. Taking a deep breath, I blurted, "I . . . I met a friend of yours yesterday."

"A friend?" he repeated. "I have no friends anymore."

I lowered my voice, "I think your mother would not appreciate my telling you this, but you do have a staunch friend in Roger Quarry— and perhaps he can help you."

His eyes widened. "Roger?" he questioned with a slight derisive laugh. "He can't help me."

"I know your mother does not think so," I said, "but all the good doctors are not necessarily in Europe. There are certain treatments he could use. He said to let you know that he would be at home any time you chose to call, no matter what the hour—day or night."

"If you should see him again, you may tell him that I do not choose to call."

"He will be very disappointed," I sighed.

He gave me a curious glance, almost as if he were sorry for me. Then, he repeated softly, "You promised to play

for me, my dear little Miss Clinton. Am I not to have that pleasure?"

Since my persuasions had proved futile, I said, "Of course, only you must play for me, too."

"I shall," he assented.

"Have you any favorites?" I asked.

"I am partial to the works of Liszt," he said.

"And so am I!" I exclaimed. "I will give you the first of the Transcendental Etudes."

"Ah," he said, "I like those. I once made a transcription of them for the violin."

"Then play them with me," I invited.

"No, we will play them together, later, but first I wish to hear you alone."

"As you choose." I played the "Preludio," but for the first time in all my musical life, I was not totally in tune with the composer. I was aware of Jonathan Weir, as he stood near the piano watching me. It was an unsettling feeling. I did not like it. I was not satisfied with my playing, but when I lifted my fingers from the keys, he said, "*Brava*, Miss Clinton. You are, perhaps, the finest artist I have ever heard."

"You need not tell me that," I exclaimed. "I was not happy with what I did, not at all."

"What artist is ever satisfied?" he asked. "I never used to be, myself."

"Why do you speak as if your artistry were all in the past?" I demanded. "From what little I heard, it is splendid."

"The technique remains, perhaps, but the essence is gone," he said bitterly.

"No, no, it's not, it's not," I assured him earnestly. "Play for me, now."

"I'll not equal your performance."

"You'll surpass it!" I cried.

"You are quite wrong," but he tucked his violin under his chin.

"What will it be?" I asked.

"You have heard of Mendelssohn's 'Songs Without Words?' " he smiled. "This is a work without a name." He drew his bow across his violin.

I listened incredulously at first and then I became entranced by both the music and the artist, for he was a superb violinist. Under his bow, I heard sounds I had never heard from any other violin. It wailed, it laughed, it moaned, it sighed. There was the sound of the wind in the trees and of the swift-running rivers and of the gently falling rain. There were many moods—I felt loneliness in it and a terrible grief, so terrible that it brought tears to my eyes and then took them away with its laughter, but it was not happy laughter—and it changed quickly into a mournful, sobbing minor key—and then, again, into a shriek of pain and anger, but before these could completely register, there was a dancing melody and it was on that, he concluded. When he rested his bow, I could have wept, for it seemed to me that his whole unhappy soul had been revealed to me. No, not his whole soul . . . the music had ended too quickly for that. Something had been held back and I wanted to hear it . . . "Don't stop, I beg you," I pleaded.

"I have played enough by myself," he said firmly. "Now—we will play together. The 'Harmonies du Soir' from your Etudes."

That, too, was a wonderful experience. I had never played with a violinist before and I had been a little tentative at first, but after we finished "Harmonies," I was loathe to stop, and so was he, as he proved when he asked, "Another?"

"Oh, yes," I cried excitedly.

We played another Etude and another, until we had finished all twelve of them, and as we worked together I was aware of a communion with him that I had never enjoyed with any other person. It was as though the music had sent forth invisible bands to chain us together. Again,

I did not want it to end, but inevitably, it did, after we finished the last of them—the “Chasse Neige.”

When he had laid down his violin and I had regretfully taken my fingers from the keys, he looked at me for a long moment. “I . . . enjoyed that,” he said finally. “I did not think I should enjoy anything . . . ever again.”

The sadness I had felt in his music communicated itself to me again and I had an impulse to put my arms around him, but I was able to hold myself in check. I could not, however, keep from crying, “But in music lies your salvation! You should never have given it up? How could you?”

His eyes grew somber again. “I have no answers for you,” he said moodily. He turned toward the garden doors. “I must go,” he announced abruptly.

“But you will come again, you must come again!” I cried.

“You are asking me to come again?” he said, looking at me with a strange intensity.

“Yes, yes,” I breathed. “Come tomorrow morning and we will play all the day.”

He frowned. “That . . . is not possible. But I will come . . .”

“Any hour, day or night,” I said, unconsciously echoing Dr. Quarry.

“Very well, I shall . . . because you have asked it of me,” he said, taking my hands and pressing a kiss in the center of each palm. “Good night, Miss Clinton.” He moved toward the French doors and disappeared into the darkness.

Hardly knowing what I did, I ran after him, but though I reached the door only seconds later, I did not see him anywhere in the moonlit garden.

Feeling let down and lonely, I felt the music room. I expected to find Mrs. Weir standing near the door, but she was not there. I was glad of that, as I did not want to talk to her nor to anyone else. I wanted to be alone in my room

to think. No, I really did not want to think. I wanted to lie in my bed and hear in my mind that compelling music. If I tried, I knew I could remember every note he had played. I was sure of it.

I hurried up the stairs and into my chamber, stripping off my gown as fast as I could manage the hooks and eyes, but once I was washed and ready for bed, I was much too restless to get into it. I wanted . . . I did not know what I wanted. Yes, I did . . . it was Jonathan!

Stepping to my windows, I gazed down into the garden, wondering where he had gone so quickly. I wished I might see him, walking down one of the paths. I could not, but I seemed to know he was there. I was sure of it, for in my head was a picture—the little pillared folly at the end of the path. In the back of my eyes, I could see him standing, looking out into the pool, but there was no pool, there were only vines, growing over the spot where the silvery water had once gleamed—why had it been drained?

"Because evil dare not look at itself, for it will find nothing."

I stiffened. Who had spoken? It was a voice I knew, a most beloved voice . . .

"Barbary, Barbary, Barbary . . . beware. Step from the window and pray . . . on your knees, pray for your soul, your immortal soul!"

I looked around me fearfully, but I saw nothing, there was only the voice. The tones had been commanding and at the same time censorious. It had sounded . . . it had sounded like my dead mother's voice, so much like it that I spoke her name aloud, "Mama?"

"Pray . . ." came the command again. *"Pray."*

Pray. I had been commanded to pray. At home, before I went to bed I had muttered my prayers each night. I had not thought to do that here. I fell on my knees, clasping my hands. "Our Father, who art in . . . in . . ." Before my eyes was the folly, its pillars bathed in moonlight and in the shadows near the vanished pool, he waited, waited for

me, I knew it . . . I knew it. I rose to my feet and ran to my dressing room. I pulled my cloak from the hook and threw it around me.

"*Barbary . . .*" I heard the voice again, but it had to be my imagination, for Mama was dead and how might the dead hold me when the living awaited me in the garden?

I ran into the hall—it was dark, but I had no trouble finding my way, I could see the stairs quite clearly. I sped down them and found to my utter delight that the front door stood wide open!

In minutes, I was outside—how good the grass felt beneath my bare feet and how wonderfully free it was not to be encumbered by my heavy petticoats and my gown. With the mist-ringed moon to light my way, I came around the house and into the gardens. Once on the path, the gravel was sharp against my tender soles, but I did not care. If they were to bleed, I would not care for at the end of the path I had chosen rose the folly!

I reached my goal and sank panting on the moonlit floor and all about me were the sounds of the night, the frogs, the crickets, the faint peeps and squeals of the creatures that lived in the grasses and dwelt in the hollows of the trees and then, I heard a sound that blotted out all the other sounds.

"*Barbary . . .*" It was his voice.

For a moment, I was confused for no shadow disturbed the brightness of the floor, but looking up I saw him smiling down at me. I raised my arms to him and he lifted me against him, saying, "I called to you . . ."

"I heard you," I told him and knew that I had.

"Why did you listen?" he asked. "I didn't want you to hear."

I looked at him in amazement. "You . . . you didn't want me to . . . come to you?"

His arms tightened about me. "Yes, I wanted it for myself," there was a throb of sadness in his voice, then, "I did not want it for you. You are so lovely . . . you have

so much to give the world . . . the world, Barbary, think of the world."

"What are you saying to me?" I felt tears in my eyes.

"I am saying I don't want to hurt you. It was cruel . . . cruel to bring you to this house, but she is cruel, no one knows that better than I, her son."

I wound my arms around him. "Hush . . . hush, I want to be with you."

"Don't you think that is strange, Barbary? Don't you?" he asked.

"Why . . . strange?"

He put his hands on my shoulders. "Doesn't it seem strange to you, that you've come to me here, Barbary?"

"No, for I knew you'd be here."

"Doesn't it seem strange to you that you knew I'd be here?"

His question troubled me, because I knew it ought to be strange. Long, long ago, it would have been strange, but now I only knew I had to be with him. "No," I said.

To my utter surprise, he suddenly knelt at my feet, looking up at me, his face a mask of sorrow. "I called you, but I didn't want you to come. But you had to come because it had already begun, before I knew . . . before I knew *you* and I must do as I am compelled to do, there's no escaping it—for either of us, Barbary."

His words meant nothing to me. "You mustn't kneel," I cried. "Don't be away from me." I knelt beside him.

"Oh, why aren't you afraid of me, Barbary?" he demanded, almost desperately.

"It seems that you are afraid of me, my dearest, my darling." I laughed tenderly and slipping from my knees, I lay full length on my back. I held out my arms to him and he, sighing, gathered me against him. His gentle fingers were at my throat, loosening my cloak. He unfastened the buttons of my nightdress and slid it down over my shoulders, baring them, baring my breast. His mouth was on my

breasts and then on the hollow at the base of my throat and then against my neck.

"It was you, then," I breathed. "You who came to me in the night."

He made no answer. My neck was throbbing under his soft lips—it was a strange feeling; I was beginning to feel a little light-headed and much as I wanted to be with him, I was frightened. I tried to draw away, but he held me fast and then I wasn't frightened anymore for he was kissing my face again, my face and my throat and my breasts, my gown was being eased from my body and I was tingling all over, a sensation so pleasant that when at last it ceased, I wept and pressed myself against him . . . until a great darkness blotted out his beautiful face and the moonlight and I knew no more.

I awakened to the sound of rain spattering against the window. As Mrs. Weir had predicted, the mist on the moon had presaged foul weather, but unlike the previous day, I felt no regrets, though I vaguely recalled that I had been disturbed by the possibility. I wondered why—and with an effort remembered that I had wanted to go for a walk through the woods to a . . . house, yes, it had been a house . . . someone I had wanted to see, I could not remember whom, nor why I had wanted to go . . . when I was so happy with Jonathan at Weir Hall.

I had dreamed about Jonathan—such an odd dream. We had been in the garden and he had been sad. I didn't remember any more of it.

I lay watching the raindrops trickle down the glass and loved the dimness, it was so much more soothing than the harsh, white light of the sun. There was a wind blowing; it drove the drops against the window panes and moaned around the corners of my room, a low, mournful, keening sound, which I found very beautiful.

Glancing at my clock, I was vaguely surprised. It was eight thirty, which was late—much later than I usually

slept. With an effort, I sat up and started to get out of bed, but as I rose, waves of weakness washed over me and I stepped or fell back into the softness. I was not concerned over my condition. It was lovely, just to lie there. My eyelids were heavy, I was growing sleepy and presently, I slept again and dreamed again.

It was a weird dream. It should have frightened me, but instead, it excited me. I was in the midst of a great, empty darkness, walking, or rather floating in the middle of the air. Then, suddenly I was in a place of towers, tall, tapering towers, set close together like the trees in the wood. Then, they were moving, twisting, and writhing, and twining together and I saw that they were not towers, they were serpents, a large mass of serpents and I was in their midst, surrounded by their flat, triangular heads. Even though they struck at me, I felt no fear, not even when I saw their thin, round bodies coiled around me, their black forked tongues not darting at me, but lapping, lapping the blood that poured from my wounded neck and I was thrusting my two hands into the squirming mass of them, holding them against my face, unmindful of their searing tongues.

Then, they vanished and I was in the darkness once more, but I was not alone—a tall man stalked beside me, a tall man in a high-crowned hat. Catching me by the shoulders, he thrust his face into mine and I recognized him as the Puritan from the portrait in the drawing room—Gideon Weir. His features were alive with hatred. His hard fingers burned into my bare shoulders. "Accursed, accursed, thou art accursed, thou whore of Babylon, thou sorceress of Endor."

I laughed at him and locked my arms around his neck, opening my mouth for his kisses, but he shrank and dwindled in my arms and I was bound high up on a stake. There were ropes wound around my naked body, but though they held me fast, I felt no pain for they were soft

and velvety to the touch. Then, there was music around me . . . a violin which wailed and sobbed.

My bonds loosened, I floated down from the stake and began to dance. My hair, golden and black, flew about me; there were bright bangles on my arms and ankles, they clinked together as I leaped and whirled and twisted—and the violinist was beside me, playing, playing, playing, until I wrenched the violin from his grasp, crying, "Play me instead, me, me, me, let me be your instrument, my love, my love . . ."

"Miss . . . Miss . . ." he called fearfully, shaking me, "Miss, wake up . . ."

With a gasp, I opened my eyes and looked up into a thin, lined face, topped by a white cap pressed down over brown hair streaked with gray. I wondered what she was doing in my dream. "What . . . why . . ." I mumbled.

"You was havin' a nightmare'n cryin' out like you was scared, Miss."

"Scared," I repeated, "no . . . not scared, want to . . . to . . ."

She pressed her hand against my forehead. "As I thought, you're a mite feverish, Miss."

I came back to reality slowly. "I . . . was dreaming," I murmured.

"An' tossin' about somethin' awful. I brung you up some soup, Miss. The Missus thought as how you might not be feelin' so good."

I pulled myself up against my pillows. "Why would she think that?" I asked curiously.

"On account of you slept so late, Miss."

"Late?" I questioned, glancing at my clock and finding to my amazement that its hands were pointing to twenty past two. "So late!" I exclaimed. "I never . . . I don't . . ."

"Shhhh, now don't you worry," the woman soothed. "It's like I said, it's just that you're not yourself, Miss. There's a lot of sickness goin' around among the young

these days." She shook her head. "Never seen anythin' like it. . . . Mary Lovell, who works for the miller's, been in her bed a week'n Sarah Duncan from the dairy's just up and around . . . she was feelin' terrible run down . . . an' there's about six others I could name. There was sickness right here in this house. That Nancy Milligan was feelin' real poorly afore she up'n went off. There's somethin' goin' around, Miss, like I said. Now suppose you have somethin' to eat."

"Who are you?" I asked curiously.

"Agnes Sykes," she said.

"Oh, yes . . ." I nodded, remembering that I had heard her name, though I could not recall when or where.

"Have some nice soup, Miss," she smiled.

"I . . . I'm not hungry," I grimaced.

"It's broth . . . lovely chicken broth. That cook's a caution, the way she throws things around that kitchen'n scolds the help, but she knows what she's doin' when it comes to cookin'." Moving away from the bed, she came back with a tray on which was a soup tureen. She set it down on the night-table. "Let me give you a spoonful of this nice broth, Miss. You'll change your mind when you taste it, I know." Dipping a spoon into the soup, she brought it to my lips. "Now just one swallow," she said gently.

Not wanting to be ungracious, I opened my mouth. It was good. I reached for the bowl and had the rest of it.

"That's good, you should eat. The others didn't . . . and it went a mite hard with them . . ."

"The others?"

"The others as was sick . . . they're better now and you'll be all right, too. It's already put a bit of color back in your cheeks. Now . . . you must rest." Picking up the tray, she left.

I was glad to see her go. Talking to her had tired me. I didn't want to talk. I wanted to sleep. I was feeling very odd, very weak. I could not remember ever having experi-

enced such weakness before. But aside from that, I was in a very pleasant mood—it was really lovely, just lying in that soft bed, doing nothing but staring out at the rain which was still trickling down the window panes and presently, all these zig-zagging drops merged together and I slept.

When I awakened again, the rain had stopped and afternoon sunshine filled the room. I winced against its brightness. It made my eyes ache. Turning, I buried my face in the pillows and then, I must have slept again, for when I next opened my eyes, the hateful, hateful sunshine had faded leaving the sky, a washed-out white filled with shards of rose-edged clouds and now, I was glad it had cleared. I wanted to walk in the garden when the moon was up and, as I had in my dream, perhaps I would really meet Jonathan.

Slipping from bed, I hurried into the dressing room. It was while I was taking my bath that I recalled I had not been at all well that day. Some woman—Annie? No, Agnes, had awakened me from a . . . nightmare, she had said, and now fragments of it were floating through my mind.

I giggled when I thought of all the snakes . . . imagine picking them up! Yet, some of them had been beautiful with their black and white, diamond-patterned skins. A much odder fantasy was kissing or wanting to kiss that horrid Puritan man.

“If I were ever to see Gideon Weir in person,” I murmured, “I shouldn’t want to kiss him, I would bite him, instead. I would bite him until the blood ran down his neck.” Closing my eyes, I could see his portrait and on his white collar was a dark red stain, growing larger and darker as the blood trickled down from his savaged neck. I ran my fingers across my lips and staring at my hand. I was surprised to find it free of that scarlet stain.

A shudder shook me. How had I happened to think of

anything so . . . horrible? Why should I expect to find blood on my mouth.

My neck . . . my neck was throbbing. I hadn't noticed it before. I touched it and found two little raised welts on it. I wondered how I had come by them and as I did, I was frightened, terribly frightened. Out loud, I said reassuringly, "I was bitten by some sort of insect." Yet, I found I didn't believe it. I have a vague memory of . . . of . . . but no, I couldn't remember. I was hearing violin music—it was in my ears. No, I was wrong, it had been in my dream, that haunting provocative melody. I began to move up and down to it in the water. I had danced to it and tonight, I might dance to it again, but the fiddler would no longer be a phantom from a dream—he would be there—*Jonathan, Jonathan, Jonathan!*

I clambered hastily out of the tub. I needed to dress, perhaps he was already downstairs in the music room—waiting for me.

I had great trouble selecting a gown. I could not imagine why I had brought such a great load of dowdy clothes with me; they were all lavenders, violets, whites and grays, the mourning colors custom decreed a daughter should wear for the year following her parents' deaths, but they had been gone seven months! It hardly seemed fair that I should be condemned to all this dull drabness!

Then I noticed the one black gown I had brought. I wondered why I had not thought of it first of all. It was beautifully cut. It had a tight fitting bodice that would show off my tiny waist to perfection and if the silly woman who had sewn it for me had only followed the pattern I had given her, it would also have had a low neck, but she had sewn a band of lace across it! I wondered why and had a fleeting memory of having asked her to do it. I also recalled that I had only worn it a few times. It seemed to me that black had never been one of my favorite shades. Yet, that was ridiculous—it was a lovely color and would also be very flattering.

As I had anticipated, I looked absolutely ravishing in it! My golden hair seemed brighter and my skin paler. As for the lace band, I would not tolerate it! Fetching my reticule, I took out my scissors and carefully clipped it off. I had beautiful breasts, how silly I had been to hide them! I laughed into my mirror and then, I frowned, seeing the two little blue welts on the side of my neck. They had grown larger. However, I also had a black velvet ribbon and, once around my neck, it proved even more becoming than the purple had been. I enhanced it even further by clipping a ruby and diamond brooch to it. Rubies were not mourning colors, but I was wearing black and besides, why should I continue to simulate a grief I didn't feel?

When I came out of my room, the hall was shadowy for the sky was darkening. Yet, I could see very well. My eyes were becoming accustomed to the darkness, I imagined. I walked hurriedly toward the stairs and then, out of the corner of my eye, I caught sight of those closed doors. One of them must open on Jonathan's room. Retracing my steps, I stopped at the first of them, but when I looked inside, I found the furniture shrouded in dust-covers. The other rooms along my side of the house were all empty, but the first door on the other corridor opened on a lavishly furnished apartment, reeking with the heavy scent that Mrs. Weir used.

Another likeness of the woman hung over the fireplace, but I needed neither her perfume nor her portrait to tell me that I was in her chamber. The place was much disordered, shoes were scattered about and her gowns lay on chairs and on the floor. Her bed was also covered with discarded clothes. Evidently, she did not have a personal maid, either. I wondered why the place was so greatly understaffed, but it hardly mattered.

I was on my way out, when I caught sight of a little table loaded with knickknacks. For some reason, I felt I must examine them. Going over to it, I found a small,

crude, oil painting propped on a little stand. It showed a carriage going over a bridge and a man lying beside it, as if he might have fallen out. In the water that ran below the bridge, I saw a woman, her arms up, as if she were struggling. There were odd symbols traced across it; a six-pointed star with Greek letters inscribed upon it. I found the subject very unpleasant. I could not imagine having it in my bedroom. A sob rose in my throat and tears started rolling down my cheeks. I was extremely surprised. I could not understand what had made me weep. I did not feel unhappy. In fact, I was enjoying myself. I wondered why I had not explored the upstairs regions before. I hoped I would find Jonathan's room. Moving away from the table, I went out and continued on down the hall, where I found two more empty chambers, but there was a door at the end of the hall and seeing it, I knew instinctively that this was where he slept. I ran to it, but it was locked. I shook it futilely, half-sobbing with disappointment.

I wanted to see it—no, that was not true. I had come to find him, to be with him, to feel once more his kisses on my throat and breasts, to lie entwined with him on his bed. I pummeled the door with both fists. "Love, love, let me in, please, please let me in," I moaned. "I need you . . . I need you." Falling to my knees, I clutched the doorknob and pressed myself against the unyielding wood.

Then, in the midst of my anguish, I had a strange sensation. I felt as if I had left my body and was looking down at the weeping woman, which was myself. What was she doing? Why was she crouched there sobbing outside the chamber of a man she barely knew? How to explain the hold he had over her? How to explain the unholy desire she had for him . . . the dark passions that expressed themselves in images so obscene that they must be devil sent?

I felt the wood against my face and rose slowly to my feet and went swiftly to the hall, looking down the curving stairwell. I had only one thought in mind, I had to get out

of this house, far, far away from the castle and the troll queen, who had spirited me away from my home and my family—to what purpose? She had talked to me of my music, had promised me fame, but that was only an excuse, I was sure of it. She had had another reason in bringing me to this lonely place, an evil purpose, but hadn't I known that all along? With an effort, I sent my mind back to my first day at Weir Hall, I had not liked it. I had hated it, I had planned to leave the very next day, but I had not gone. Why? It was so hard for me to remember . . . my head was too full of too many thoughts . . . thoughts as thin as cobwebs, they floated up to the surface of my mind only to tear and dissolve before I could examine them, but the fear remained and with it was a dreadful certainty. I was in danger, in danger of losing my life and . . .

"Your soul."

I started, looking around. Someone had whispered in my ear, no, someone had shouted loudly and the word reverberated from rafter to rafter. "Your soul . . ." I could lose my soul, but how? Was I dreaming? I had had so many dreams of late, so many beautiful, strange, compelling dreams . . . to think of them was to want to sleep again, but no, I must not think of them. It was dangerous to think of them. My heart was beating so heavily, my fear-driven heart. I pressed my hand against it and felt bare skin!

Looking down, I grew faint with shock—my breast was almost totally exposed! How had that happened? There had been a lace band set in the neck of my gown because Mrs. Moulton, the seamstress, had said it was too low without it and I had agreed with her. I examined the neckline. The band had been carefully cut away, but there were little loose threads to indicate that it had been there. Who had cut it away? Had it been the woman who had come naked to the room of the man she had loved, naked except for her long black hair?

I flushed. What had called Mrs. Weir's horrid indecent story to mind? It was better forgotten. Why had she told it to me? Nice women did not speak of such things. Nice women never let a man see their nakedness, that was what I had been told. Mama had said . . . Mama? Tears filled my eyes. I missed her so dreadfully. How terrible to know that she was dead and I would never, never see her again? And dying that way . . . a woman struggling in the water . . . a picture was in my mind, a small crude picture. Where had I seen that? Horror turned me icy. A picture, a picture on a table in *her* bedroom, showing the death of . . . of my parents? What did that mean? There was a meaning, I knew that. Those symbols, I knew them, too.

A vivid image sprang to my mind . . . tall men in black clothes, their faces stern. They had tied their horses to the posts in front of our house and they had knocked on our door—their knocks were as thunder, reverberating through the rooms. They called on my family to turn me over to them. "For she be a witch, a witch, who do make poppets . . . and there be those who sicken and die. Bring her to us . . . the witch must be destroyed!"

Huddled in a secret place, I had laughed at them and cursed them while I laughed and drew that six-pointed star on the windowpane with my finger and watched through that same window while they rode off—and shrieked with laughter when the horse of the leader shied at something none of them could see and threw him to the ground, breaking his head open.

There was a throbbing at my temples, what had I been thinking about . . . I had to get out of the house, that was what I had to keep in mind, but it was hard to hold onto any one idea, but I must save myself. It was dark outside, but I could see well enough in the dark. I could hear, too. I could hear the little creatures in the grass and the earthworms in the ground . . . and the owl flying overhead, but what did that matter? I must get away. The stairs ended in the hall; directly across from them was the front door, I must

run down them and open the front door quickly, quickly, before anyone saw me and then, I would be free. Now, Ellen . . . Ellen? Who was Ellen? Now—Barbary Clinton, Barbary Clinton, run, run, run for your life and your soul!

Lifting my skirts, I dashed down the stairs and into the hall, the empty hall. No one would see me. I pulled open the front door.

"Good evening, my dear." Mrs. Weir swept out of the drawing room. I saw her from the corner of my eye and had to clutch the doorknob to steady myself, for I had grown faint with terror.

Striving to speak in a normal tone of voice, I said, "Good evening. I am in need of air."

"Are you?" she smiled. She was wearing a bright yellow dress and it was trimmed with red. Golden earrings swung from her ears, almost reaching her shoulders. Her gown was cut low, her hair piled high and fastened with a jeweled comb. She looked beautiful, but it was a barbaric beauty, an evil beauty. I had to get away from her, but I must be very clever, she must not suspect that I was afraid. She said, "It is very close in here. Before she left, Breen shut all the windows."

"She left . . . Mrs. Breen left?" I asked.

"Yes, she doesn't live in . . . she has a little cottage beyond the woods."

"Beyond the woods," I repeated, thinking that there was someone else, who lived beyond the woods. I had a blurred image in my mind—a man, tall, blond, who had spoken to me, had told me . . . I couldn't remember what he had told me. He was fading from my memory—there, he was gone completely, like a blown-out candle flame.

"There's a nice breeze tonight, but it's cold. Do not stand there too long, my dear. You've been ill, you know."

"Ill?" I repeated, looking at her blankly. "I've not been ill. I feel well, wonderfully well." I did, I realized. I

gazed at the sky—it was a dark blue. Soon it would be much darker. "I do love the night," I said.

"So do I," she agreed. "It is the first night of the full moon."

"Oh, yes?" I gazed at it, loving its white brilliance. It would light me through the woods.

"You're looking very beautiful, child," she commanded. "Black is most becoming to you."

I was pleased by her admiration, "Do you think so?" I asked, turning away from the door.

"I should not say it, if I didn't mean it. I am a very honest woman."

I bit down a laugh. She was not honest, there was nothing honest about her. Why was I standing there, talking to her? I had to leave, immediately. I stepped over the threshold. I must take other steps, concentrate, concentrate, one foot ahead of the other foot, across the porch, down onto the graveled walk, there was the driveway curving away to the gates. I stood there, but I must not stand, I must run.

The breeze was growing stronger. It was turning into a wind, a high cold wind. I shivered. Above me, the tree tops were bending, their branches lashing against each other, the wind was so cold, icy cold and it tore at me. My hair was loosening, it swirled about my face, the wind was invading my gown, my skirts were big with it, I would be blown away! I had to escape its fury, I had to get back into the house! I fled before it, up the steps, across the porch, into the house, I slammed the door against its invisible, grasping tentacles and sank down on the hall floor, shaking, shivering, weeping!

"Child, child." Mrs. Weir helped me to my feet and half-carried me into the drawing room. She was so strong. She helped me onto a couch and then stepped away from me. "Here, drink this." She came back carrying a glass, half-full of some dark liquid. "It will warm you." She tilted it toward my mouth and I swallowed a little of it.

The liquid was hot on my tongue; it burned my throat. I coughed. "What . . . what is it?" I asked nervously.

"Brandy, my dear. Drink it all."

I didn't want it, but I could not evade the glass, tipped toward my lips, otherwise the liquid would run down my chin. I swallowed it and it was warming, it made me feel better, much better. "It's delicious," I said gratefully.

"Yes, the finest . . . my husband bought in France, years ago." She stroked my arm. "But you are still cold." Taking my hand, she added, "Come . . . over here by the fire."

I did not want to go with her, I must not go with her, but I was cold. I still wanted to leave, but I would need to wait until I was warmer. Reluctantly, I suffered her to lead me to the fireplace. It was a wonderful fire, the flames leaped high and there were faces in them. I sank down on my knees and stared at them. She sat down near me. I was about to move away, when she caught me by the shoulders.

"Put your head in my lap, child, and I will rub your temples. You will find it very relaxing."

"No," I protested, trying to free myself.

"Come . . ." she said softly. "Whenever I was cold and overwrought, as you seem to be, my old nurse used to rub my head. It was wonderfully pleasant and always it made me feel much better." Reaching around me, she touched my temples and began to massage them gently. I did feel good and when she stopped, I was regretful. Yet, I felt it was necessary to edge away from her. I started to move, but her hands slipped to my shoulders. "My little dove, lie back against me, so." Her voice was very soothing. I liked the sound of it.

"You are very kind," I began and then, I decided to let her ease me back against her perfumed skirts. She began to stroke the sides of my temples and as she massaged them, she hummed a little tune. I began to feel drowsy, but at first I tried to fight against sleep. It seemed to me that

there was danger in sleeping, but her hands were so gentle and her husky voice so pleasant that I had no choice but to surrender to it. I dozed and dreamed of . . . Jonathan. He was standing close to me and the flames of the fire were in his eyes. I was so happy to see him.

"I looked for you," I whispered. "I couldn't find you. The door was closed and locked against me."

"It's open and I have found you," he replied.

"Oh, I am happy . . . so happy," I told him.

"Are you, Rapunzel?" he asked seriously, and then he stepped back into the shadows.

"Don't go!" I cried, starting up.

"Dear child, what is it?" Mrs. Weir asked anxiously.

I was still lying on her lap. "I dreamed . . . was it a dream . . . I saw Jonathan."

"Yes, you dreamed . . . for he has not been here, but later he will come."

I sat up. "But where is he now?" I demanded, looking around the room. "I want to see him."

"You will, I promise you," she smiled. "Do you feel better now?"

"B-Better?" I stammered.

"More relaxed?"

It was difficult for me to concentrate on what she was saying, when Jonathan was so large in my mind, but finally, I remembered that I had been cold and that she had massaged my head. "Oh, yes," I hastened to assure her. "I am wonderfully relaxed."

She smiled. "I knew my massage would help you."

"It certainly did," I said gratefully. "Thank you."

"I am glad. You must tell me something, my little dove. Whatever possessed you to run out into the cold?"

"Run out? . . ." I said blankly. At first, I did not know what she meant, then I had a vision of myself standing beneath the wind-lashed trees. "I . . . I was looking for . . . Jonathan." I said. "I couldn't find him in his room . . . the door was locked."

She smiled. "I see. Well, you needn't look for him, he will come to you."

"When?" I clasped my hands. "When?"

"Soon, but first, let us have some supper."

"Oh, but I'm not hungry," I protested. "I want . . ."

"It's time you ate. You've hardly touched a morsel today." Rising, she held out her hands to me, saying firmly, "Come, I insist."

Reluctantly, I allowed her to pull me to my feet. "I shan't be able to eat anything."

"You may be surprised," she answered. Taking me by the hand, she led me down the hall into the octagonal chamber. There were various silver dishes on the sideboard. The table was set for two. "Sit down," she invited. "I shall serve you. The servants have gone."

"All of them?" A tiny tendril of fear made me ask, "Why?"

"I gave them a holiday."

"Oh, how considerate you are!" I exclaimed.

"Sweet child," she patted my hand. "Look what I have for you." She set a large platter of roast beef before me. "Doesn't this look good?" she asked.

"Very," I agreed, realizing that I was hungry after all.

She picked up a carving knife. "How do you like it?"

"Well-done . . . no," I frowned, wondering what had made me say that. "Rare."

She sliced the beef toward the middle. "Is this rare enough?" She held up a piece which was brown around the edges and pink in the center.

"No, I prefer it to be very rare," I said.

"Like this? Possibly this is too rare?" She held up a bright red piece of beef.

"Oh, no," I cried enthusiastically. "That's exactly what I want!"

"Very good," she said in a satisfied tone of voice. "Now what vegetables would you prefer? There are peas, carrots, and beets . . ."

"No vegetables, please," I demurred. "I would just like some beef."

"The vegetables are well prepared," she pursued.

"No, please," I said edgily, "I don't want any vegetables."

"Very well."

I looked at her place. "You've not served yourself. Aren't you joining me?"

"I've already supped," she told me, "but I will drink with you." She lifted a crystal decanter and poured dark red wine into two beautiful crystal goblets. Then, she lit the candles. Their bright, wavering flames gleamed in the glass she lifted. "A toast," she cried gaily. "A toast to your great future!"

"My . . . future?" I repeated, not quite understanding what she meant.

"Come . . . drink to it," she ordered. "Drink to your great future and long life, longer than you ever imagined it could be, my beloved child."

I hesitated. Though I could not have explained it, I was unwilling to drink that particular toast. "I . . . I don't think I ought to drink to myself," I said.

"Nonsense, you must!" she exclaimed. "Drink, my darling, my dove. Say, 'I drink to a long, long life and a great future!'"

Her eyes were on mine, her stare compelling. Almost of its own volition, my hand found the glass and lifted it. Almost of its own volition, my tongue was making me say, "I drink to a long, long life and a great future!" Once I had uttered the salute, I wondered why I had been momentarily afraid to give it. Certainly, there was nothing frightening about it. The wine was delicious. I took another sip and another until I had emptied the glass.

"More?" she invited.

"Oh, yes, please."

She filled my glass again and this time, I did not sip, I drank it eagerly and was distressed because the glass was

emptied again so soon, but she filled it once more. "You are so good to me," I said gratefully.

"I am very fond of you, my little dove," she said softly. "But now . . . you must eat."

Though I had craved it at first, I discovered that I was not in any hurry to taste the beef; it looked almost raw and I knew that at home, I had always wanted it well-done. At her prompting, however, I took a mouthful of it and found it to be marvelously succulent. I consumed the piece quickly and was pleased when she put several more thick slabs on my plate. I finished every morsel, washing it down with more wine. "I . . . fear I shall grow tipsy," I said.

"No, you won't, little one," she laughed. "You will find that you have developed a head for it."

I arose. "Why . . . I think I have," I said. "I don't feel at all dizzy. In fact, I feel wonderful."

"Sustenance was all you needed," she remarked. "Shall we go into the music room?"

"The . . . music room?" I frowned. "Why?"

"Shouldn't you like to play the piano?" She sighed. "You haven't practiced all day."

"Will Jonathan be there?"

"Perhaps," she smiled.

"Then," I said gaily, "do let's go to the music room!"

He was not there. The room was empty, empty, empty! I wanted to wail, to beat my breasts and tear my hair, for it seemed as if I could not live another moment without him. I looked at her angrily. Accusingly, I cried, "You said he'd be here."

"I did not say so, I said 'perhaps,' " she answered, coming to me quickly and embracing me. "Be patient, little dove," he whispered in my ear. "Come." She led me to the piano. You haven't practiced all day and Professor Steinholz must hear you at your very best."

"Professor . . . Steinholz?" I questioned. "Who is he? And why should I care if he hears me—at all?"

"But surely you remember?" she asked.

"No," I said pettishly. "I don't remember. Where is Jonathan?"

Her eyes gleamed with amusement. "Then . . . if I were to tell you that I have heard from Professor Steinholz and that he has refused my invitation to visit me, you'd not be disappointed?"

"Why do you talk to me of this man?" I asked querulously. "Why would I be disappointed? I think you are teasing me."

She laughed, "I think I am, too. But won't you play for me, now? It would please me to hear you."

I was reluctant still, but since she was asking me, I had to obey. I wanted to please her. I was really so very fond of her. I settled down and started to perform a Chopin nocturne, but the music sounded so dull! I wanted something gay and lively. A tune was in my mind—I did not know who had composed it, but I was sure my fingers could follow it. I played it, hesitantly at first and then more easily. It was a fast piece with an odd rhythm. I wondered where I had heard it. I seemed to see a girl, dancing naked to the sound of a violin. She had golden bangles on her wrists and ankles; she writhed and twisted sinuously. There was a smile of pure pleasure on her beautiful sensuous face. I experienced that same pleasure. My body was on fire, my fingers raced over the keys and the sound of the violin was louder, louder. It was all around me. I looked up and there was Jonathan with his violin tucked under his chin, playing for me. I could not sit still at the piano, the rhythm of the music was pulsating through me. I sprang from the bench and began to whirl around the room, my skirts flew wide and my hair swirled around my face, but then, I grew jealous because he did not seem to be aware of me. His eyes were closed, he had a rapt look on his handsome face—he cared only for his music!

I ran to him and caught at his arm. "Jonathan, Jonathan," I panted, "let me be your instrument, oh, Jona-

than, my love, my love . . .” and then I stumbled and fell to the floor, my head was going around in circles. I felt so weak, so dizzy, so exhausted. I was only vaguely aware of being lifted and borne to the couch, but I knew his arms were around me.

“Jonathan,” I moaned, “take me, take me . . .”

“Do as she asks,” his mother commanded, “she is ready.”

“Does she know why she’s ready?” he asked angrily.

“In her heart, she knows. The seeds were there, they needed only to take root and the soil proved fertile. As I knew it would.”

“But she doesn’t know,” he said.

“Why should that matter?” she demanded contemptuously.

There was a long pause. “Because . . . one ought to know.”

“I tell you, it will not matter to her. The seeds . . .”

“The seeds, the seeds . . .” he repeated bitterly. “They are not preparation enough. They grow too slowly and memories are long.”

“But in time . . .” she said softly.

“In time . . .” He emitted a short bark of a laugh. “That’s cold comfort, mother, dear.”

“I think you blame me still. Do you . . . can you believe that any loving mother would deliberately expose her son to that?”

“There were the seeds . . . you knew about them.”

“But I did not think . . . I never expected . . . I was in torment when I heard what had happened, but have I not helped you in this past year? And have you fared so badly? You’ve yet to become used to it, my dearest, but you will. You are much stronger than when I brought you home. You will grow stronger and more powerful. A thousand nights from now, you will be thanking me. A thousand years from now, you will still be thanking me because of

what I have been able to teach you—and she will thank me, too.”

Their words meant very little to me in my confused state, but his tone of voice varying from sadness to anger and from anger to accusation, troubled me. I wanted to help him, but I was still too exhausted to speak.

His hand was on my hair, stroking it back from my face. “Poor girl,” he said.

“What is this? Pity?” There was a thread of anger in Mrs. Weir’s voice. “You can’t know pity. You are pretending, only pretending, Jonathan, because you like to torment me. What was she when I brought her here? A milk and water miss, with no more knowledge of passion than a goose. Now . . . she is fit to be your companion, your lover. You’ll not be lonely anymore.”

“The eagle has brought the mouse to her nest,” he spoke so bitterly that it hurt me.

“Jonathan.” I managed to sit up. “What is the matter, my dear love?” Oblivious of Mrs. Weir, I drew his head down to my breast. “Don’t you want me?”

Mrs. Weir smiled at me. “You see,” she said with triumph edging her tones. She rose. “I will leave you, my dear children, for you should be together—but alone.”

“Jonathan . . .” I said a little plaintively, tightening my hold on him. “Don’t you want me?” I repeated. “I want you . . . my love . . . my love.”

“Barbary . . .” His voice was husky, his lips sought mine and then, he kissed the hollow at the base of my throat and my breasts.

“Oh,” I murmured, rubbing my face against his, returning his caresses, “I am happy . . . so happy.”

He tensed. “Are you, Barbary?” He moved back and stood up. “I want you to do something for me.”

“Anything,” I breathed. “But stay close to me.”

Taking my hand, he urged me up. “Come . . .”

“But I want to lie here with you,” I complained.

“Come . . .” he repeated.

I rose reluctantly and followed him across the room to the piano. "Why . . ." I began.

"Play for me, Barbary," he commanded.

I reached up and touched his hair. I let my hand trail down over his cheek. "I don't want to play," I whispered.

"Have you forgotten how much you love your music?" he asked. "Does this mean nothing to you now?" He struck a few notes on the piano.

Looking at it, I was conscious of a strange feeling in my heart—akin to pain. I trailed my limp fingers over the keys. Yet I had no urge to play, even though it seemed to me that I had once loved something about it, but I could not remember what. With Jonathan at my side, I could only think of how much I desired him, how much I craved the sweet agony of his kisses.

"There are tears on your cheeks," he said.

I touched my cheeks and found them wet. "Oh," I said, confusedly.

"Do you know why?"

I put my arms around him, pressing against him. "It doesn't matter."

"Oh, my poor, poor child. . . ."

"Why do you call me 'poor?' I am with you."

He sighed, "I don't think you know what you're saying or doing."

"I know," I murmured, lifting his hand and kissing the fingers. "I know."

"You came looking for me earlier tonight, don't you remember?"

"Yes, I went to your room . . . but you weren't there."

"I was there."

"Why didn't you open your door, then?"

"I did, but you weren't aware of it. You were frightened. Do you remember being frightened, Barbary?"

"You're teasing me," I accused. "I'm not in the least frightened."

"But you were . . . and there are those who might have protected you from me."

"From you?" I laughed. "Why are you saying all these odd things, Jonathan?"

"You've no recollection of being afraid, Barbary?"

"No," I said wonderingly.

"Your mother might have protected you, you know."

"My mother?" I questioned. "She's dead."

"Murdered," he frowned. "Did you know that?"

"No," I shrugged. "Love me, Jonathan, love me."

He stroked my hair gently. "Poor Rapunzel, I want to love you, but not . . . here." Seizing my hand, he said, "You must come with me."

"Where will you take me?"

"Out to a place where we will be completely alone, out to a place which you must see." He led me through the French doors into the garden.

"Oh." I clapped my hands. "We're going to the folly!"

"A little further," he repeated. "Come."

It was very light outside. The moon hung over the tree tops like an immense lantern. "Oh." I smiled up at it. "The moon is even brighter than the sun."

He halted, staring down at me and amazingly, I read pain in his eyes. "No, no, no," he cried. "It's not . . . there's nothing as bright . . . as the sun."

"My love, what is the matter?" I asked.

He shook his head. "Nothing. Come."

We walked on and I, looking upwards, thought the stars seemed very strange. They did not twinkle. "The stars are like little moons . . . each so round. Why are the stars so round, Jonathan."

"Do not look at them," he said almost angrily.

"Very well, love, I shan't. Oh, I am so glad to be with you." We did not walk through the gardens, we skirted them. "Where are you taking me?" I asked.

"Do not question me, Barbary," he ordered, but the pressure of his hand on mine softened his words.

We walked on in silence, but there was no silence around me. I had never heard the frogs and the crickets so loud and also in my ears were some high, piercing cries. I looked up to see the bats flying; I saw them very clearly, their ugly faces, their immense ears, their flat leathery wings, and their plump furry stomachs. There were owls, too, with their tufted heads and their wide cats eyes. There were sounds beneath me, too. I seemed able to identify each of them—the rabbit snoring in his hole, the badger, the snake, the spider, the earthworms and the slugs, each had a movement peculiarly its own—nor were any of these minute noises obliterated by the sougling of the wind through the trees. I could even hear the leaves brushing against each other.

We came to a high wall of cypresses and Jonathan led me between two of the trees. I was momentarily startled to find that we were on the edge of a small graveyard. There were a few rows of stones, some old and crumbling, others newer. In the center rose a small, marble mausoleum. "Why have you brought me here?" I asked.

"You were looking for my room . . . I have more than one room, Barbary . . . I don't sleep at the house," he said and led me down a graveled path to the building. It was centered by a bronze door. He touched it and it swung back. "You can see that you'd not have to pound on it. It opens easily enough." He bowed. "Would Madame wish to enter?"

I hung back, "Why . . . ?"

"Are you afraid, Barbary?" he asked gently. "Do the habiliments of death still hold some terrors for you?"

"I . . . I do not understand . . ." I whispered, shrinking against him.

"Don't you?" he asked. "No, I can see that this knowledge has not yet come to you and that is good. But you must enter, my love. I will precede you." Stepping ahead of me and turning, he stood framed in the doorway, holding out his hands to me. "Come, Barbary," he invited.

I did not want to go. I began to shudder. "No, please . . . I . . . I am afraid," I wept.

"You must come," he said inexorably. Seizing my hands, he pulled me inside.

Though there was no lamp lit nor a window to let the moon shine through, I could see very well and for some reason I did not understand, this clarity of vision frightened me.

It was a small square room and on one side of it, there were shelves on which rested coffins. As had been the case with the stones, some were very old and others were newer. Jonathan led me to a shelf that was on a level with my eyes. Directly in front of me lay a long, black coffin. He started to lift the lid.

"No, no, p-please don't," I begged, clutching his arm.

"Don't be afraid," he soothed. "You'll see no horror of the charnel house, no rotting body nor grinning skull. Look!" Thrusting it all the way back, he repeated, "Come, look inside, my love." He pushed me forward and I found myself staring into a silken interior. At one end was a small pillow but other than that, the coffin was empty.

"Why . . . w-where . . ." I stuttered.

"You wish to know the whereabouts of its occupant?" he demanded curtly. "Behind you, my dearest." He put his arms around my waist. "These are his arms." He pressed his mouth against my neck. "This is his mouth." He moved back and whirling me around so that I was facing him, he smiled broadly, widely. To utter horror, I saw that on either side of his mouth was a long curving fang! "These are his teeth!" he cried. "These are the teeth that have enabled the man, whose room lies on that shelf, to fill his dead veins with your living blood, my love, my dearest love." His laughter was loud and harsh and terrible.

I shrank back from him. "What . . . do . . ." I began and then I stopped, for there was no need to question him. Somehow I knew, knew beyond all doubt what had hap-

pened to me and what would happen soon. All the warnings that had been whispered to me were etched on my mind, burned there in words of hellfire. I had been tricked, trapped, and seduced by the trolls, by the demons of the castle. . . . I wanted to flee, but I could not step beyond that bronze door, for it was too late. I could see too well and hear too clearly and, in common with this new knowledge that was flooding through my mind, my vision and my hearing were part of my metamorphosis. "Oh, sweet Christ, protect . . ." I cried and then I clutched my throat and screamed from the pain of pronouncing the name of Him who had forsaken me.

Then, in the midst of my torment, I heard a strange sound, the sound of weeping and looking at the man who had defiled me and damned me to the abyss in which he dwelt, I saw that he was shaken by great harsh sobs and in his eyes, I read an anguish far greater than my own.

"Jonathan!" I cried. Putting my arms around him, I held him tightly and then, taking his two hands, I knelt and pulled him down beside me on the stone floor. I stroked his hair gently. "You mustn't weep."

He raised his grief-twisted face to mine. "How can you touch me . . . how can you want to comfort me. . . . Is it possible that you still don't understand . . . ?"

I kissed his cheek. "I do understand . . . I know what you are and what I shall become . . . I . . ."

"I didn't want this," he interrupted. "I had no choice . . . none. I had to do . . . what I did. . . ."

"I know that, too, but I love you."

He looked at me in horror. "You . . . can't know what you are saying, Barbary."

"I do know . . . I do." I cried passionately. "Your mother has said that whatever I am thinking can be read in my face. Look at me, my dearest! Am I ignorant, Jonathan? Am I not telling you the truth? I *know* and still I find I cannot stop loving you. I will die loving you, die gladly, because I will be with you." I tore the ribbon from

my neck and thrust myself against him. "Kiss me, my dearest. . . . Kiss me, Jonathan, now, and let there be an end . . . so that there may be a beginning!"

He stared at me for a long time and then, leaning forward, he kissed me gently on the lips. "Come . . ." he said. Lifting me to my feet, he drew me out into the sound-filled night.

"Where are we going?" I asked, as he led me back across the graveyard.

He did not answer. Stopping just as we reached the cypress barrier, he put his arms around me and I felt his mouth upon my neck. I had a momentary pang of terror and regret, but so that he would not read it on my face, I buried my head against his chest. A wave of vertigo washed over me. "Is . . . is it happening now? Am I . . . dying?" I whispered.

His voice was very gentle. "Until we meet again, Barbary," he said, kissing me once more. Then, the moon was blotted out and all the night sounds ceased.

Dr. Quarry has been to see me. My niece Maude was annoyed at that, but she only echoed the rest of my family, when she asked angrily, "Why won't you see a younger doctor? He's over eighty!"

"I'm not so young myself, Maude," I countered.

"All the more reason why you need a progressive man, not an old country doctor!"

I did not argue with her. Of all my family, she is the one who most has my interest at heart. I am sure of that. She is a dear girl and we are much in sympathy, but I can't tell her why I still see Dr. Quarry, nor can I explain why his visit today was so extremely important to me. However, one day she will read these papers and then she will know.

Today, he finally brought me the manuscript. His handwriting is even shakier than mine, but it is legible and I may add it to this account, this story he has told me so

often that I know every word, which is what he said and testily, too. "You could have written it from memory, even better than I, Barbary."

"But you had to do it. It will lend authenticity to my own narrative. You know how those who are deeply interested in psychic research always try to have a doctor or a scientist verify any given occult experience."

"Very well, now you have your verification," he growled, but he kissed me when he left.

Herewith Dr. Roger Quarry's manuscript:

At the request of Madame Barbary Clinton, I am putting down the particulars of an event that took place on a night in late September, 1868.

God knows, it doesn't seem that long ago. I remember it as clearly as though it were yesterday. I would ascribe that to my advancing or, as some would say, advanced years. We old people always recall the past more clearly than the present, but this incident has remained clear all these fifty years. I remember every detail, even that there was a particularly brilliant moon that evening. In fact, I drew my bedroom shades against it, for I was bone weary.

I had been out on calls. I had performed an emergency appendectomy on a kitchen table and delivered a child to a family who already had seven little ones. The poor woman was fretting because she could not attend to them, the husband being drunk and unwilling to look after his brood. I ended up feeding the children and I tried to talk some sense into her brute of a husband. I left him weeping, but there was an unopened bottle in easy reach and I had no doubt that by the time I was out the door, he would be swilling down his gin. It gave me a great sense of futility.

I went on home and fell into bed around nine. I was dead asleep when there was a pounding on my door. I think I dreamed the pounding for some minutes before I realized that it was happening. Then, when I glanced at the clock and realized that it was two in the morning, I had

half a mind to ignore whoever was below, but the pounding continued unabated and finally, I stumbled downstairs and yanked open the door. "You know what time it is?" I growled.

"You said—any hour day or night and so I've come."

I didn't see anyone at first, but I knew the voice. "Jon! Jon, old man," I exclaimed, wide-awake now. I stepped out onto the porch and saw him standing in the shadows, carrying someone in his arms. "What the . . . ?"

"Will you ask me in?" he said.

"Ask you in . . . what sort of a fool question's that? Come in, of course come in. I opened the door and he stepped past me quickly and went into my parlor. He put whomever he was carrying down on my sofa and knelt beside it. Coming in, I saw that it was a young woman. He was brushing the hair back from her face. "You've got to help her, Rog," he said in a low desperate tone.

"What's the matter with her?"

"Turn up the gaslight and have a look at her."

In lieu of gas, I lighted a kerosene lamp and held it over her. I nearly dropped it. I had never seen anyone so dead white. She looked as if most of her blood had been drained from her body. "Where . . . where did you find her?" I asked.

"You don't recognize her?" he demanded.

"No . . ." I started to answer, then I looked at her a second time and noticed her long blonde hair. An image of the young woman I had seen at Weir Hall three days earlier sprang to my mind and with it the message I had asked her to relay to Jonathan. "This . . . can't be the same girl, I . . . I met out walking near . . ."

"Weir Hall?" he finished. "Yes." His mouth twisted. "She's that girl. Her name is Barbary Clinton."

Shock turned me into a stutterer, "W-What h-happened to h-her?"

"Can you help her?" he questioned sharply.

"It looks like she needs a transfusion and pretty quick,"

I said. "I've had occasion to treat several cases of anemia, lately . . . but . . . but I've never heard of galloping anemia. What happened, Jon?"

He still didn't provide any answers. "Will you be able to save her?" Without giving me a chance to answer, he clutched my hand. "You've got to save her, man!"

My guts contracted. I had never felt anything so cold as his hand and evidently sensing my inadvertent reaction, he took it away quickly. "You . . . you're sick, too, Jon," I said, scanning his face now, and seeing that he was almost as pale as the girl. There was something odd about him, but I couldn't put my finger on it. "It seems to me that you might be in need of a transfusion, yourself."

"There's no helping me, Rog," he said shortly. "Can't you find someone who will give her blood?"

"Not here . . . that rainstorm today, the roads are badly mired, dangerous at night. We'll need to wait until sunup."

He tensed. "Will she survive that long?"

I took her pulse. It was stronger than I had expected. "I'd say she will, only I'm glad you got her here. Why didn't you call me sooner?"

"You'll need to put her to bed upstairs. Will you let me stay by her side until the morning?" he asked.

"Sure I will, Jon." I was finding his manner more and more peculiar. "But why haven't you been to see me?"

"Are all the windows closed down here?" he questioned.

"Yes," I said. "But . . ."

"And upstairs?"

"Except for my room . . ." I began and stopped as he went quickly into the hall and up the stairs. "You'll need a light . . ." I called, but he didn't heed me. In a few moments, he returned. "The window is shut. Bolt the door and I'll take her upstairs."

"You act as if you're afraid of something . . ." I began, but again he wasn't listening. Coming back to the sofa, he lifted the girl as easily as if she were a feather pillow and striding from the room, he hastened up the stairs.

Once she was settled in my bed, he sat down next to it, staring at her, as if he couldn't bear to stop looking. He worried me. "You look damned ill, Jon. Whyn't you try and get some sleep, yourself."

He laughed. It was an eerie sound and it made me damned edgy. "I'll have plenty of sleep soon," he said.

"You should've come to see me before, Jon. You've been home a year. I could've helped you. I've studied in Paris . . ."

"If you'd studied on the moon, you couldn't help me," he said bitterly.

"Dr. Charcot . . ." I began.

"Dr. Charcot tends the living," he rasped, "not the dead."

I took an involuntary step backwards, knowing then the answers to all my questions. He was insane. I said gently, "You . . . you don't know what you're saying, Jon."

He raised his eyes to mine and I saw that they were bitterly amused. "You think I'm mad, don't you? I wish it were true. I wish I might wake from this horror and know I was mad, not damned. It's better to be mad, better to spend your life screaming in a padded cell than to know how close Hell is."

In spite of my dislike for her, I pitied Magda Weir then, and I understood her refusal to let me see him. It must have been a terrible blow to her—to see the disintegration of her adored son. I was also nervous. Jon had been my best friend, but I couldn't like the idea that I was shut in the house with a lunatic and, judging from the way he had lifted the girl, one of amazing strength. Yet, there was nothing intimidating in his attitude. I read no menace in his eyes, only a great brooding sadness.

The change in him hurt me. I hardly recognized the boy I had known. He had been my best friend—the leader and I, his devoted follower. At his urging I had climbed after him up the tallest trees and the highest cliffs. With him, I had swum far out to sea. Nothing had ever frightened him.

He was daring, brave and invariably good-natured, at least when we were together. When he was with his mother, he was different—subdued and edgy. I knew she embarrassed him with the caresses she lavished on him even in company, but he accepted them with a good grace. I knew, too, that she exercised a strong hold over him, especially when it came time for him to start seeing young women. If he showed signs of becoming more than ordinarily interested, she would always manage to discourage him, pointing out the importance of his musical studies, the need for total concentration. He had wanted to go to war, but she managed to keep him out of it—she and his father, too. I had wondered why he yielded so readily to her persuasions, for even I could see that they were masks for her jealousy. Studying with Charcot had given me new insights into such relationships, insights I had, even until yesterday, wanted to share with him, but now, I could see it was too late.

How had he come by his madness? It had happened after his visit to his mother's people in Brasso, I knew that. Then, I recalled something I had almost forgotten. I had been invalided home from the war in '64, a few months before he left for Vienna; we had started writing, a correspondence that continued when I went to France in '65. I had hoped to see him but my work with Charcot had been all-consuming—but still we had continued writing and after I came home in '66, I had received a letter mentioning a girl called Heidi. It was unlike him to write about the women he knew, which had led me to suspect it was serious. My suspicions were confirmed when another letter described her loveliness and then, he had written that they were engaged. Had she broken off that relationship? Had that sent him into melancholy and subsequently, madness? It hardly seemed possible, but one never knew. He was an artist and deeply sensitive. In the interests of seeing his reaction, I dared to ask, "What happened to Heidi?"

"Heidi?" A shudder ran through him. "Poor girl. She was my death," he said in a low voice.

I had to humor him. "Why?"

"Because I loved her . . . or thought I did. I didn't know . . ." He stroked Barbary's hair. "I didn't know there could be deeper loves. We were to be married and at the urging of my mother, I went to Brasso to make arrangements."

"Arrangements?" I asked.

There was a mocking light in his eyes as he answered, "She told me I should be married from her old home and she'd come to bestow her blessing. You don't know what that meant to me. You shouldn't know, but I'll tell you. It's all a part of what happened to me . . . a reason for my . . . damnation.

"You see, my mother and I . . . one night, when I had just turned thirteen, my mother and father had one of their many quarrels . . . this one was worse than most and she came weeping to my bed and crawled in with me. I comforted her as best I could . . . and then she began to stroke and caress me. I became excited . . . I tried to make her stop, but I was afraid to hurt her feelings, she was so upset . . . and . . . and my excitement grew and finally I . . . I couldn't keep from . . . from . . ." His eyes were filled with anguish. "I am sure I need not explain to you what happened. Afterwards, she wept and told me I was bad, evil . . . that I couldn't ever marry because I had known my mother, unlawfully. After that . . . whenever I looked at a girl, she would always remind me, but when I went to Europe, I didn't feel as guilty, somehow. In fact, as I matured, I even felt that she had invited . . . what had happened between us. Still, when I wrote to her about Heidi, I was nervous and I feared her answer.

"She wrote me a beautiful letter. I was overjoyed, ecstatic! Mother understood! Mother had forgiven me!" His laughter hurt my ears. "I went to that crumbling castle

and the moment I came inside, I hated it. I knew I could not bring my Heidi there."

"Why?"

"Because I felt evil all around me. It weighted the air, this evil which had come from ages past and invaded every crack and crevice of the place and every pore of the skins of those who dwelt in it. If only I had left immediately, but they were my mother's people, mine, too, and so I accepted their invitation to spend two nights. And on that first night, it happened. I became infected, too—infected and oblivious, then, to my danger."

"Infected, how?"

"In the bowels of the castle, there is a grave and in it, lies a gypsy witch, a vampire, who preys upon the living. Those who dwell in the castle are immune to her, but I, with my mixed blood, was not—I was attacked on that first night and slain on the second.

"Later, my mother fetched what was left of me and brought me here. She seemed to be stricken with grief, but later, she told me that the evil that had destroyed my life, lay dormant in my body—it was a seed, a seed which could not have taken root so quickly were there not a corresponding evil in me. It had been transmitted through both my parents—through the gypsy vagrant and the Puritan judge, who persecuted for the joy of killing—it was that evil which had driven me to possess her."

His somber gaze rested on the girl. "Oh, the horror of my first nights at the Hall, when I tried to resist the thirst, the terrible thirst, which had already come to me at the castle, driving me to hunt by the side of the gypsy in the forests of Brasso. My mother and I were very close, then. No one could have been more sympathetic, more understanding. She was my only friend. She helped me accept and endure the situation. She provided other help as well, girls from the village, servants . . . and I tried to make sure that none died from it. That was her suggestion, too, for she said it would insure my own safety, but as time went

on, I began to suspect her of having deliberately exposed me to the corruption that ended my natural life and I began to hate her, to hate all women—and the evil grew within me and there was a death—Nancy, a servant girl. My mother burned her undead body. She did not want her to share my existence, for she had brought me Barbary, whom, she said, had a heritage like mine—and she set about to prove it to me. At first, I was willing to believe it, for I wanted her, but I can't let her share my sunless days and terrible nights. I can't watch her become what she must to exist. It is said that we cannot love, but I have found that I can love . . . that I do love her, Rog." His voice broke and he buried his face in his hands.

"Oh, Jon, Jon," I said, pitying him from the bottom of my heart, but less for what he had told me than for the insanity which had caused him to spew out such morbid fancies. My work with Charcot had, I thought, stood me in good stead, because it was easy to see that Jonathan's convoluted relationship with his possessive mother was the basis for his problems. Obviously, she had found a way to break off his romance with Heidi, a shock which had made him physically as well as mentally ill, for Charcot contended that mental illness could result in physical breakdowns. And . . . I tensed, my thoughts distracted by the knocker slamming loudly against the front door. It was a night for late calls, I thought wryly, as I arose.

"No." Jonathan's icy grip closed around my wrist, "It's my mother. You mustn't let her in."

"Oh, come, Jon," I soothed, "why would she come here at this hour unless, of course, you told her you were coming to see me."

"I told her nothing, but she has ways of finding out. My mother is a sorceress."

In the interests of psychology, I wished that Charcot and his colleagues could have heard him; here was a classic example of the love-hate relationship, but it was no time for me to dwell on that aspect of his problem. There was a

patient below and I was being asked to turn him away in the interests of humoring Jon. "Jon, my dear boy," I began, then I paused, for I had heard his name called or rather screamed.

"Jonathan, I know you're there. Let me in. Don't be a fool!"

There was no mistaking Mrs. Weir's foreign intonation. She sounded frenzied, which she very well might be, finding him missing and knowing he was roaming abroad—and that he had taken her house-guest with him. I wondered how she had guessed that he had come to me, but then, logically, he would. Mine was the nearest house and I was his friend, his best friend.

"Jonathan," she cried, *"you've gone mad. You must come back."*

I had been thinking that since she had appointed herself his keeper, I should find a way to admit her, but her words gave me pause. She spoke as if his madness were a recent affliction, as if until that night, she had been unaware of his condition. It was very confusing to me.

Jonathan's hand tightened on my wrist and it was difficult for me to restrain a shudder, it was so cold. "Do not even think of letting her in," he hissed, almost as if he had seen into my mind.

"Jonathan, Jonathan, Jonathan," shrilled the woman below, following each cry with a violent slam of the knocker. Then, finally she was silent.

I found I was trembling. "She . . . she's gone . . ." I said.

"No." He answered and to my relief, he released my wrist.

A wind rose then and howled around the house—the windows shook under its onslaught. I had the strange feeling that it was trying to gain access to my house and was angry at myself for these fancies which had no business being in my medical mind.

The wind died down and the woman at my door wailed,

"Jonathan, Jonathan, Jonathan." It was an awful, agonized sound, full of fear, but more than fear, foreboding, and it continued while I wondered which of them was the madder. I was glad, however, that I had no neighbors, for surely I would have been forced to let her in and I found that in spite of the circumstances that had brought her here, I had no desire to admit her.

Then, the screaming stopped and she began to pound on the door again, but Jonathan gave no sound that he had heard her. He only continued to look at the unconscious girl and every so often, he ran his hand through her hair and once he muttered something that sounded like "Rapunzel."

I recalled that when we were lads, he had liked fairy tales, stories of ghosts and goblins and now, they must people the world of his madness. There was a heaviness in my chest. As a doctor, I knew there was no such thing as a heart-ache, but still that night, my heart did ache as I saw the yearning in his eyes, the yearning, the loneliness and the sadness.

"Jonathan, Jonathan, the sun . . . the sun will be rising . . . you may not look upon the sun!!!!" Mrs. Weir cried hoarsely and pounded on the door.

The noise awakened me from a doze and I found the birds twittering and the sky paling. I looked dazedly in the direction of Jonathan. He was still sitting near the bed, but now, he rose and bending over the girl, he pressed a kiss on her forehead and stepped swiftly back, turning toward the door.

"You're going?" I asked, surprised.

"Yes," he said. "Thanks for your help, Rog. Tell her when she is able to understand you, that she mustn't abandon her music. Tell her that when she plays, she will be playing for me, as well. Tell her that I love her more than my life, more than my soul."

"Don't go," I said, out of a foreboding I did not

understand. I started to follow him but he motioned me back.

"No," he said urgently, "you must stay here with my love until the sun rises. Only then will she be saved from dying into evil . . . from losing her immortal soul . . . from the fires of hell . . . from joining the unhallowed ranks of the Undead." A twinkle flickered briefly in his eyes and I glimpsed the old mischievous Jonathan I had known as a lad. "Remember, Rog, that you must humor the mad." He waved at me and strode out, closing the door behind him.

I remained with the girl as he had instructed. Then, as the sun came up, I heard Jon cry out, while from below, there was a long keening wail.

I rushed into the hall and nearly fell over Jon, who was lying on his face by the window. Kneeling beside him, I gently turned him over and then horror such as I had never experienced smote me—for I found myself looking on the dry and sunken features of a man who had been dead for many, many months.

I, Roger Quarry, physician and accredited psychologist, attest to the truth of the above narrative. Signed: Roger Quarry, M.D.

Dr. Quarry took me to a little private hospital, where I was given many transfusions. Of course, I knew nothing about any of this. I was ill with what Dr. Quarry termed "brain fever." Later, I was told that I had cried out for Jonathan incessantly. Even when I was getting better and knew I had escaped the living death I would have known with him, I still wept for him and longed for him.

Dr. Quarry did not explain how I happened to be his patient until he deemed me strong enough to bear the truth. Then, when he told it to me, he was extremely regretful for I became ill again. Finally, some four months after I had been brought to the hospital, I was able to leave. With Alicia Brent, a kind, young nurse Roger had hired for me,

I went to stay at his house for another fortnight of observation before returning to Clinton House.

On an afternoon in the early part of the second week I had been with him, I remember coming in from a walk in the snow with Alicia. I was feeling much better, almost my old self. As we entered the hall, I found that his office door, usually closed because he saw patients at that hour, was open; he was alone. Seeing him sitting at his desk, I had an urge to talk with him—to tell him about my experiences at Weir Hall. "Dr. Quarry," I said impulsively and stepped inside, only to hesitate and wonder if I dared.

Finding his kind eyes on me, I felt that he must have guessed what was in my mind. I knew it, when he said, "Miss Brent, I have a patient coming in at two. Would you explain that I was called away." He added, "Come on in, Barbary, and close the door."

I obeyed and sat down on a chair across the desk from him. "I . . . I don't know how to . . . to begin . . ." I faltered.

"Just begin," he smiled. "I think you'll find it easier than you imagined."

He was right. The words poured out of me and I found that my mind had cleared amazingly; I could remember everything, even the moments when I had obviously been under Magda Weir's malefic influence. In describing her, I could not keep back my tears and intermingled with them was fury. "Something should happen to her," I wept. "She . . . she should not escape!"

Roger looked very grave. He hesitated a moment, then said, "Something did happen to her, Barbary. She's dead. Her servants found her in her bedroom on the day Jonathan . . . died. She had taken poison."

"I am sorry for that!" I exclaimed. "I wish I might have strangled her with these two hands!"

Leaping to his feet, he came around his desk and seized my hands in his powerful grip. "Do not talk of killing,

Barbary. These lovely hands were not meant to deal out death; they were meant to make music."

"Music?" I shook my head. "Surely you know that I can never play again!"

"You must play," he said gravely. "For Jon." He led me out of the office and into his parlor, where there was a small pianoforte. "This is a poor excuse for an instrument," he grimaced, "but try it out, Barbary." He gently steered me toward it.

"I can't," I said stonily. "I have suffered too deeply. All my inspiration is gone. I have no desire to make music."

"You must try," he urged and forced me to sit down on the bench. Then, as willfully, I let my hands hang at my sides, he placed them on the keys. "Try!" he ordered.

The smooth surface of the keys felt good beneath my finger ends, but I was still determined to prove that I had lost all interest in my art. Deliberately, I plunked out a scale and then, the Etudes were in my mind again, the music of them humming in my brain and traveling from my head down my shoulders, down my arms, down my wrists into my hands. I couldn't resist it; I had to play, and as my fingers flew over the keys, I seemed to hear the sound of Jonathan's violin. I couldn't stop playing, not until all twelve of them were behind me—and then, I knew that I was really cured and more than that, I knew what I must do. Jumping up, I flung my arms around Roger's neck and kissed him on the cheek. "Thank you, oh, thank you. You've given me my life . . . and now you've given me my music again."

He held me close. "I wish," he said huskily, "that I could give you much more, Barbary."

I knew then . . . or had I known it before, that he loved me. I knew that I might even be content with him because I respected him, liked him, and because he, of all the people in the world, was the only one who understood what had happened to me. But it would not be fair to base so

close a relationship merely on the strength of that understanding. I could never return his love, for it was still in the possession of Jonathan. I told him that and while he was disappointed, I think he was relieved, too, for he has never married. I do not pride myself that he has cherished a broken heart all these fifty years. Some men are born bachelors.

Of course, all this time, my family had not been packed in cotton wool. Roger obtained my luggage from Mrs. Breen and, learning my address, immediately notified Judy and Will. They came to the hospital to take me home but on hearing I could not be moved, they went back to Clinton House. They had returned several times and they fully expected to come for me at the end of the week, but after that afternoon, I had no intention of going back to Clinton House. I prevailed upon Roger to send them a telegram explaining that he had lengthened my visit to a month.

It took several years and my debut at New York's Academy of Music before Judy and Will forgave me for going to New York during that time period. Of course, I was not alone; I was accompanied by Roger and Miss Brent and once I was settled in a suite at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, I hired a piano and started practicing again.

Roger went home, but Alicia Brent stayed with me. At first, we both considered it a temporary arrangement, but after my successful audition for Professor Walter Steinholz, who, I might mention, had never heard of a Magda Weir, Miss Brent stayed on to care for me and handle that part of my business that Steinholz did not manage. The "temporary arrangement" came to an end forty-one years later when, to my everlasting sorrow, Alicia Brent died after a concert in Brussels, during the course of my annual world tour. I was utterly bereft and terribly confused, for she had attended to everything for me. I was sure that I could not continue with my career, but I did—for another eight years, playing my final recital in Boston, in May of 1916.

I have been retired for the last two years and I am back at Clinton House in the room I occupied as a girl. I am glad to be here. Judy, Will, their son Bill MacIvor and his wife Jean are all so kind to me, as is young Bart, Bill's son, who married at nineteen and already has a son of his own, Edmund. Bart's sister Maude, my great-niece, is particularly sweet to me.

I have written this account for her and for the others in the family, for though none of the children have had other than a very normal and peaceful existence, I still feel as if we are all in danger, for we Clintons and MacIvors share a common heritage, Ellen, the witch, whose evil makes us vulnerable to other evils. We must see that we do not inadvertently provide the soil for the seed, as I did when I entered the house of Magda Weir. All of us might not be saved as I was saved. Oh, Jonathan, Jonathan, I do not need this little picture Roger Quarry gave me . . . to see you. You are as clear in my mind as you were when we first met—and I miss you. I still miss you so very much.

Oh, my dear love, I try—I want to be worthy of your great sacrifice. In my leisure hours I have done considerable reading and I have also talked to ministers and priests. Thus I know that your suffering is not ended—that your soul remains in eternal torment. I think of that and wish you had taken me with you. Surely the existence of the "undead" would have been less terrible, less agonizing than my loneliness.

No, no, no, you were right—and God have mercy on me for believing anything else—there can be no joy in evil, no happiness in Hell! Thank you, my dearest, for saving me from that!



PART THREE

Maude



JONATHAN . . . JONATHAN . . . HER agony was mine! Closing the book, I absently stroked its leather cover. I felt so empty . . . so drained, so old. Glancing down, I saw my hand—white on that red cover. I was surprised at its whiteness, its softness. I had expected to find it thin, bony and blotched, the blue veins big on it, the nails yellowed as I had been used to seeing it . . . no, not I, she . . . Barbary, in the last years of *her* life, *hers*, not mine!

An image arose behind my eyes—a heavy face, dark eyes, dark hair, the tracery of a moustache on the upper lip. “Mrs. Weir,” I identified and knew I was right, but Barbary Clinton had written nothing concerning that downy lip, nor had she mentioned little golden ear-bobs with filligree fringes, yet these had dangled from her pierced lobes, but why should I be able to remember them or Mrs. Weir, remember and see her so clearly in the crowded chambers of my mind?

“I don’t . . . I don’t . . .” I moaned. The specters that haunted the memory of Barbary Clinton were not mine and if I believed I envisioned them, they could be creations of my own imagination. Yet, as I had read, there had been so many images and shards of images, some fading like finger streaks on a fogged glass, when I attempted to examine them more closely, others remaining, others I did not want to see because they were so ordinary and by their very ordinariness, rendered real. Horse-cars for instance—I had traveled on a line called the Harlem Co. City Cars, but it had not been pulled by horses but by mules and the driver had sworn at them, flicking his whip across their stubborn backs and Alicia and I had been furious at his cruelty. Then, I was in the huge, brown interior of Horace

Waters, trying out pianos. Horace Waters, who was he? I had never heard the name, yet, I could see it, etched in squat gold letters across a plate glass window and then . . . I recalled heavy gray moustaches, yellowish at the ends and waxed. Professor Steinholz . . . no, no, no, he should have been only a name, not someone I could recall and identify even to the steel-rimmed specacles he wore, even to the white carnation in his buttonhole—always a white carnation!

It was as though in the reading of Barbary Clinton's account, she had invaded me, this woman who had died long before I was born. "Dead . . . she is dead and gone, dead, dead, dead, Barbary Clinton."

"Come away from the mirror, darling. Monkey see, monkey do." Mother spoke archly, but she was also chiding me, because she feared that I was too vain. *"You spend far too much time in front of the mirror, Lorrie."*

How could I explain that I was not being conceited. How could I explain that I was worried because the face staring back at me did not seem to be mine, that I was thinking there ought to be another image in those silver depths, an older face, not Lorrie MacIvor aged six and a little over—how to tell the woman behind me, the woman, whom I called "Mother" not Mama . . . but none of this mattered . . . what mattered was something I shrank from contemplating—Jonathan, Jonathan, who died for me. No, he had not died, for the dead could not die . . . I shuddered.

Music was in my ears, *Mazeppa* . . . a coldness in the room and he standing over me. "Where have we met?" he had demanded. Jonathan, dead and condemned to eternal torment, asking me Barbary, Lorrie not Barbary, Dario not Jonathan!!!! Dario and Lorrie . . . Lorrie and Dario.

I ran my hands through my hair. I felt disoriented, detached, appalled by the thought that I was not me—that the life I was currently living was not mine, not really mine, but a continuation . . . a continuation, or a variation

on an old theme? "The Moonlight Variations," I said, since so much had happened by moonlight. I wanted to weep, because over and above all else there was Jonathan, **struck** dead by the sunlight as all evil must be . . . evil Jonathan, driving away in his little car, not Jonathan, Dario . . . Dario, who once in the darkness of the night, had sobbed out, "There's nothing like the sun!" Dario, into whose arms I had stepped so gladly, surrendering so easily!

His anguished cry was echoing through my mind again and I saw myself reaching out to him, soothing him, comforting him, not understanding, yet, subconsciously, I had known, had not been surprised at his sorrow, had understood its source. But why—or rather how had he been able to come back . . . meet me again? Why had we met again? Met again? Could I be sure? How could I be sure that he had been Jonathan or I, Barbary?

Could I accept the idea of living more than once, living many lives? It was so difficult, such a fantastic concept, yet, was there any other explanation for the feelings that had invaded me on the night I had met Dario? I was not promiscuous, not what a previous generation would have called "a loose woman." All my life, I had expected that only after marriage would I yield myself to a man. I knew now that inherent in that decision had been the fear of such a union. Yet, to think of Dario was to long for the touch of his hands on my naked body, to feel them cupping my breasts, and I stroking him, feeling his hardness between my legs and I arching against him. . . . Our coupling had been so beautiful and so natural, there had been none of the inhibitions that might have arisen between strangers—we had not been strangers, we had never been strangers.

I shook my head. It was as though I had been told that the myths of ancient Greece were a reality, that Apollo had driven the chariot of the sun across the sky, stabling his fiery horses on the top of Mount Olympus! "In hopes of glorious resurrection . . ." I could envision a graveyard and that sentence engraved on stone after stone, but we

were not resurrected, we were reconditioned and sent forth again like the white doves from Noah's ark. The Holy Ghost was represented as a white dove. I knew that. It was hard to escape from some of the beliefs of formal religion—even in our atheistic household. A year at a convent when I was little and I knew about the Holy Ghost and the Holy Trinity. I knew about the Devil, too, beliefs, my father Edmund . . . Edmund, Bart's son . . . little Edmund . . . concentrate, Barbary—not Barbary, Lorrie—beliefs my father said belonged to the realms of mythology like Apollo. Why did I keep thinking about Apollo? Because he symbolized the sun and music . . . Jonathan . . . Dario!

Dario. Out of my confusion came an image, clearer than the rest, the car again . . . driving off in the middle of the night without a word to me. Why? Because she had given him the book, because he had read as I had read and possibly remembered. . . . No, not possibly, had he seen Roger Quarry's picture of young Jonathan Weir, seen and remembered, *positively* remembered!

I shuddered. "Why did she give it to him?" I cried. "Why did she let him see it? It was cruel to tell him that he . . . he had been a . . . a . . ." My mind shrank from letting the word form in it—and I saw again, no, did not see, remembered Barbary's account, remembered her describing that scene in the mausoleum, that terrible moment when I had been told the truth—not I, *she*, Barbary Clinton. I would not think of it. I would go back to Roseanna's Tavern, remember instead Dario, the pain and exhilaration of our first loving! That was what I needed to remember, not the past, not what he had been—for the thought of that turned me cold—and what would it have done to him? Oh, he should not have read it, should not have been exposed to that knowledge. It was not necessary for him to know or for me, either. We should have been left in ignorance—the past had nothing to do with our present or our future. For some reason we were not meant to fathom, we had been allowed to meet and love again . . . perhaps because there

had been a pattern, a design that needed completing. I did not understand, could not begin to understand. I only knew that he should not have been made to read the confessions of Barbary Clinton. Why had Aunt Maude given them to him? Was he being made to suffer for her old enmity toward me?

Fury dried my tears. I ran out of the room and down the hall to her chamber. Flinging open the door, I rushed inside and saw her, propped against the pillows, looking at me coldly, but she was not startled by my abrupt entrance. She had been expecting me. I read that in her eyes. "Why . . . ?" I began.

"Close the door," she commanded, "and then we'll talk."

I closed it and stepping to the bed, I cried, "Why did you show him this book?" I threw it down on the bed.

She gave me a long, level look. "It has had quite an effect on you, I see." She touched it. "I thought it might. It did on me and I am not you." She spoke with a peculiar emphasis and added, "But do you know who you are?"

I did not want to think about the implications inherent in her remark. "Why did you . . ." I began again.

"Sit down. Calm yourself."

"I want to know . . ."

"You will know everything," she replied, "but I'll not tell you anything when you're plainly on the verge of hysteria."

I took a long breath and then another. Finally, I said as calmly as I could, "Why did you show him this?"

"I did it for you. I did it—because ultimately, he would have been your death—whether he willed it or not."

"My . . . death?" I echoed, incredulously.

"Yes," she said feverishly, "because he could not help it, Lora, because he has come back into your life for that one purpose. It's not the first time he's returned. He was here in this house once before, on the night you . . . the night that Barbary died."

"Dario . . ."

"Let's call him by his rightful name. Let's call him 'Jonathan Weir.' Accept the truth as it stands, Lora, you with your Barbary face and your Barbary fingers and then remember . . . remember what happened on the night of your death. Think of the shadow in the corner of the room, think, think, think!" She had lowered her voice to a mere whisper, but its cadences seemed to resound through the chamber like screaming.

I was frightened of her—more than that I was frightened of what she wanted to tell me. "I don't know what you're talking about. I'm not Barbary. I'm Lorrie, Lorrie MacIvor . . ."

Slipping out of bed, she came to me and put her hands on my shoulders. Her eyes bored into mine. "You don't remember? Think hard."

I did try, then, but nothing came to me. "I don't know what you mean," I said desperately.

She sighed, "It was blotted out. Mercifully, it was blotted out, or perhaps it was not merciful, for if you had known, he would not have been able to get to you. Let me tell you what I saw that night and then you will understand his evil."

"He's not evil . . . Dr. Quarry . . ."

"Yes, I know what Dr. Quarry wrote and what she wrote, but neither of you knew the truth . . . the ultimate truth."

"He's not evil," I cried again. "I know him . . ."

"You know nothing," she rasped. "Sleeping with a man doesn't give you any insights into his soul. Oh, don't trouble to deny it," she continued, as I started to protest. "I could wish it hadn't happened because it's brought you closer to him than you ought to be, but I don't decry it on moral grounds. I . . ."

"Tell me what you think you know," I interrupted.

"I'll tell you what I do know," she said. "The evil must end with you, Barbary."

"I am Lorrie!" I shouted.

"I think I've always known it," she mused. "You are so like her, not only in appearance, but in everything. The way you talk, the way you move, the way you play the piano, but most of all because he has come again and that's the real proof. You'd better sit down." She pushed me into a chair and then, she glared at me. "You'll say nothing of this to your parents, nothing, do you understand?"

Her intensity frightened me. "I understand."

"Swear you'll say nothing!"

"I swear it."

She pulled a chair close to mine and fixing her eyes on me, she said in a low voice, "On the night that you . . . that Barbary died, I had been sitting with her. She was very ill, a cold that had turned into pneumonia. The doctor didn't think there was much hope, but she had a strong spirit and she was fighting it. . . ."

"Fighting it?" I interrupted, surprised, but not sure why I was surprised.

"Yes, fighting it," she frowned. "Do you remember something, after all?"

"No."

"Then, don't interrupt me, please. It's hard enough for me to go back over it, as it is. Well, anyway, she was dozing and then all of a sudden, she sat straight up, her eyes wide and fearful. She was pointing toward the door. I looked in that direction and I—I saw a misty figure. It . . . it had the outlines of a man. He was walking toward the bed and the closer he came, the more solid he appeared to be.

"'Barbary . . .' I heard him say, in a mere thread of a voice, and though I was terrified, I looked into his face. It was the face of the picture she had by her bedside, but, oh, God, the eyes . . . the eyes were burning, they were evil . . . they were the eyes of a lost soul . . . a damned soul.

"She shrank back against her pillows and she began to shake and shiver as if she had been seized by a violent fever. Her mouth fell open while he advanced toward the bed, holding out thin hands, bone thin—talons! She whispered, 'Jonathan, Jonathan,' as if she could not believe what she was seeing." She paused.

Shivers coursed through me, for suddenly I was in Barbary's room in her bed and I could see that figure, too. "Don't tell me anymore," I begged.

She stared at me. Almost apprehensively, she whispered, "Have I made you remember, then?"

"No, but I . . . I don't want to remember. I'm afraid."

"You should be afraid," she said. "He came closer to the bed, never taking his eyes from her face. 'I've come for you, Barbary . . .' he said. 'As I should have come years ago.'"

"Without knowing quite what I was doing, I fell on my knees and I grabbed for a little gold cross I always wore around my neck, the cross Hugh, my fiance, had given me before he went to war. Pulling it from its chain, I held it up. I don't know where the words I uttered came from—all I know is that they were on my tongue and I said, 'Out, out, unclean spirit!' He paused and I saw him blanch and then he faced me—oh, God, will I ever forget that terrible viasage, wasted by eternal torment and filled now with incredible but impotent menace. Those talon-hands were reaching for me, but I never dropped the cross, I held it up, thrusting it toward him and gradually his image flickered and was gone, but when I turned toward you . . . you were dead!"

I had listened in mounting horror, yet, even as her words sunk into my brain, I was aware of something on the periphery of my consciousness, something that made me cry out, "It . . . it couldn't have happened that way!"

"It did," she insisted. "I saw it and it changed my whole life. I was only the shell of a woman after that, tormented by my confrontation with the damned, because I

knew who he was and what he was. I had read Barbary's account. But why need I tell you these things? You know, Barbary, you know." Catching me by the shoulders, she stared into my eyes. "Don't pretend you don't remember. You do."

There was something in my mind. I saw the room, saw Maude by the bed, but I couldn't see anything more and then, the whole image wavered and vanished. "I don't know . . ." I moaned. "I can't believe he would . . . when he saved my life . . ."

"That's it," she cried triumphantly. "He had that one good impulse to save you, but evil cannot do good and in the end, he was forced to return. I know, believe me, I know all about it, now. I have studied the mysteries. I have talked with adepts and psychics. I have spent my life trying to understand what happened and I have been told that he had a task to accomplish. He will accomplish it, yet, if you let him back into your life. I warn you, Lorrie, out of the kindness of my heart, out of our family ties, out of my own devastating experience, you must never see or speak to this man again!"

Looking into her wild eyes, I was more confused, more frightened, but under these emotions ran a strong current of disbelief. She had spoken of kindness and family ties, but she had never been kind and she had used her family ties to make my life as difficult as possible. She had tried to thwart all my ambitions and now, she wanted to destroy my happiness as well. A horrid suspicion arose in my mind. "Did you tell Dario all this?"

"No," she said. "I wouldn't be so foolish. I have to think of my own safety, too."

I didn't believe her. She had told him and sent him away. I knew that as surely as I knew that everything she had just spewed out at me was a lie, but how could I prove it? Then, I thought of Barbary's room—for the first time in years, I wanted to go into it. It was more than merely wanting. I was being impelled—compelled to go there.

Rising, I said as calmly as I could, "I thank you for all you've told me, Aunt Maude."

"I hope that you have the good sense to believe me," she replied.

I did not trust myself to answer her. I merely nodded and I said, "I think I'll go to my room, now. Good night, Aunt Maude." Without waiting for her answer, I left.

During the war years, Barbary's room had been closed; gas rationing precluded tourists. Though there had been talk of reopening it, nothing had been done about it, yet. When I entered it, a musty smell prevaded it and when I turned on the light, I found that most of the furniture was under dust covers. The bed was swathed in oil-silk.

I went to my old alcove and raised the shade—it was still very dark outside, which surprised me; it seemed to me that hours must have passed since I had read the account and gone in to see Aunt Maude, but looking at my watch, I found it to be only a little after two. I looked down on the driveway and then, I averted my eyes quickly, not wanting to see the empty space where Dario's car had been—he had been gone about four hours and where was he? I shuddered, wondering what effect the account had had on him. It must have been devastating, but what she had told me was even worse. She had told it very well—she had sounded extremely convincing. If it had not been for my earlier experiences with her, I might have accepted her story. Had he accepted it? I could not think about that, now—I had come in here for a purpose. I had come in here to try and remember.

I moved away from the window and back to the bed. I touched its oil-silk covering tentatively. Old prohibitions die hard! I had been forbidden to sit on the bed and yet, I knew I must not only sit on it, I must lie on it. I rolled back the cover and slipping off my shoes, I sank down on the pillows as once, years before, I had seen Aunt Maude do. They were soft beneath my back—it was a remem-

bered softness. As I lay on them, I began to feel oddly weak, oddly breathless . . . but that was not surprising considering my illness. I had had great trouble breathing, lately—there had been the pleurisy, such a dreadful stabbing pain in the side. They had given me laudanum.

I looked around for Maude and found her seated beside me; I was very grateful. She was a dear girl. She had always been so much kinder than anyone else in the family. Oh, the others, even including Will, were proud of having a so-called great artist in their midst, proud, a little awed and possibly annoyed at all the adulation I received—especially when it came in the form of mail, bags of it from all over the world, causing the postmen to grumble when they carted it up to us. Maude, however, had always helped me sort it, knowing which letters to keep, which to throw away. It was a welcome service, something no one had done for me since poor Licia's death. I was so glad she was with me now, for I was feeling so odd—I had never been so totally lacking in energy. It was difficult for me to lift my hand even. Then, it occurred to me that I might be dying. The idea held no terrors for me. I had lived far too long already; fifty years too long. If I could have had my way . . . no, I shied away from thinking about that particular wish. Too much had been sacrificed to keep me alive—too much. I winced; I was too weak to control my thoughts, to ward off the anguish that threatened to invade it. Time, which was supposed to heal all wounds, had not put more than a cobwebby coating over mine. I still missed Jonathan so dreadfully. Let me but hear the sound of a violin in another room and I would watch the door, hoping that he would emerge, knowing, of course, that he wouldn't. I stifled a sigh. I wanted to sleep—perhaps it would be my last sleep and then . . . suddenly, my gaze was drawn toward the door.

A man was standing there, someone of the family, perhaps. I hoped Maude would send him away, as she had shooed all the others out. I didn't want to see anyone, but

he was coming in and she was not making her usual protest, she had been hemming a skirt and her head was still bent over her work. He was coming closer, and then I recognized him—but that was impossible! He was dead, dead and damned. I blinked, wanting to banish the vision. It was too hurtful, but it remained and though I was not sleeping, I knew I had to be dreaming, just as I had on so many nights of my prisoning life. Yet, he was smiling and looking at me so lovingly.

"Jonathan . . ." I mouthed. He came closer, stretching out his hands to me, beckoning me to rise. I was about to reach out to take them, when I heard a gasp. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw that Maude had risen and was staring at him; her face was full of wonder and delight. She was smiling at Jonathan!

"Oh, I see you . . ." she whispered. "Come to me . . . come to me, Jonathan . . ." She held out her arms toward him.

"Maude . . . stay back," I whispered.

She turned and glared at me, then she pushed me backwards, her hands were so hard against my aching chest—and her eyes were filled with anger, then she turned toward him again. "Have me . . . take me, Jonathan . . ." she begged and running toward him, she fell in an inert heap on the floor.

He was oblivious to her. He was standing beside the bed. I could not raise my hands, I was too weak, but it did not matter, because the room was filling with a wonderful radiance; it glowed around him, too. It warmed me as I had never been warmed before; he was bending down, I felt his arms encircle me and then, I felt nothing more.

I opened my eyes and found myself staring at the long white length of the sheeted chaise. For a moment, I was bewildered and, at the same time, terribly disappointed. Had I only dreamed that Jonathan had come for me?

I looked around for Maude and my perplexity increased

as I remembered her anger, remembered the cruel shove she had given me. I sat up. It was easy to sit up. The pressure on my chest was gone. I could breathe easily, long deep breaths, without pain. Regretfully, I realized that I was better. I could have wept. I had recovered from my illness and Jonathan had been only a phantasm of my delirium. I was alone again. The knowledge was like a dead weight in my heart. "Oh," I sobbed and smote the bed, "why couldn't I have gone with him?" I moved my fingers, feeling something smooth and slick under my hand, not my bedspread, not my eiderdown . . . what was it? Then, I knew—it was the oil-silk covering of the bed. I was back in the present, but the past remained strong in my mind and I knew why Aunt Maude's description of her experience had rung so false. Somewhere in my own consciousness, I had known that Jonathan was not lost forever, that his evil had been negated by his sacrifice, vanquished by the goodness that had remained in his nature.

I knew something else, too. Aunt Maude's odd ability to "read my mind" as she had put it, was a manifestation of her own psychic powers for she, like myself, was a direct descendent of Ellen, the witch. It was those abilities which had enabled her to share in Barbary's vision—and in sharing it, she had fallen in love with Jonathan—or possibly she had wanted him before that, possibly she had been intrigued by his picture. It came to me that she had wanted everything Barbary possessed—her success, her fame. The family had spoken about Maude's sweetness as a young girl; my parents believed she had changed because of her experience in this room, but she had not changed. Her characteristics had been veiled by her youth and beauty and she had been able to conceal her jealousy under a cloak of helpfulness. No wonder she had been so eager to tend me—Barbary—it was her way of gaining access to a kind of life she would never have of her own. The purpose behind her ceaseless wanderings around the world was also

clear to me. She had not been seeking enlightenment; she had been trying to raise the ghost of the man she loved.

I remembered her reaction in the library when Dario and I came in and shivered, but then, I was confused again. If she had connected Dario with Jonathan, why had she been so eager to confront him with the account and with her wild story of Barbary's death? Why hadn't she made an effort to keep him with her? Then, I grew cold—it was possible that her hatred for me was stronger even than her love for Jonathan. In her mind, I was Barbary and she was sending the man I loved away—something she had failed to do on that last night, but this time, she had succeeded. Tears rolled down my cheeks—what had she told him? Had she confided the story of her "vision" or had she concocted something even worse? Whatever she had said, it must have been dreadful—for knowing as much as he did about our entwined past, certainly he would not have left without a word to me. . . .

I rose from the bed. I had to find him. I had to tell him what I knew, but where could I look? Impossible to know the direction he had chosen. In his state of mind . . . then, suddenly, I stiffened, for I had heard the sound of a motor. It was coming closer. I ran back to my alcove and peered down into the driveway. I saw the headlights of a car; as it came closer, I recognized Dario's convertible! He had returned!

I rushed out of Barbary's room and sped down the stairs. Turning on the hall light, I flung open the front door and ran to the car. "Dario, Dario, you're back!!!" I cried and then, I halted in consternation. There was no one in the driver's seat! I looked around but I did not see him anywhere in that moon-bathed clearing. "D-Dario," I called, "please . . . tell me where you are . . ."

There was a step on the gravel behind me. "Lorrie," he said.

Turning quickly, I found him standing on the driveway, almost as if he had materialized out of thin air. In the

moonlight, his face was dead white, his expression enigmatic. In the moonlight, he was Jonathan!

For a split second, I was afraid of him, but he was not Jonathan . . . he was Dario, my Dario, who had loved me in the sunlight as well as in the shadows. "Dario, where did you go? I was so frightened!" I cried.

"I wasn't sure I wanted to face you, quite yet," he sighed. He added, "You're frightened, still, aren't you, Lorrie? You're frightened of me?"

"No, no, my love, of course I'm not. How could I be?" I went to him.

He backed away from me. "The moon is still bright. It's shining on your face," he said grimly. "It's an easy face to read." With a bitter twist to his mouth, he continued, "It's always has been. You haven't changed . . . not in a hundred years. I shouldn't have returned, but I couldn't go without . . ." He paused, then said roughly, "I felt I owed you an explanation, but it's not necessary, is it? You've read that account."

I put my arms around him. "Yes, I've read it, but it hasn't changed anything. I love you, Dario, I need you. I am not afraid, I swear it, and I have something to tell you . . ."

He stood like a stone in my embrace. "You ought to be afraid. The damned can be dangerous."

I held him tighter. "You mustn't believe Aunt Maude," I began.

"Believe her?" He wrenched himself away from me, saying in a low voice, "She didn't have to tell me anything. I had my own memories to guide me."

His voice was full of anguish and then, I felt a twinge of fear—but for him. I didn't want to ask him, yet I forced myself to say, "What do you think you remember?"

"Magda! . . . Magda in the night, her practiced caresses arousing me until I . . . like a randy young stallion, mounted her . . . my mother . . . my own mother impaled beneath me . . ."

"A dead woman, a dead son in the dead past!" I cried.

He did not heed me. In a dull voice he continued, "I remember going to the lake, plunging into it, wanting to wash away her smell in that pure water and knowing I would never be clean again. I remember Heidi, little, blonde, gentle. We drove through the Vienna woods one night. The moonlight turned her hair to silver. Her skin was cool, her kisses chaste. She didn't want me to go to Brasso. She clung to me and whispered, 'Johann . . . I am afraid you will not come back.'

"I laughed at her fears. 'I couldn't stay away from you, Heidi, not while I live. . . .'" His laughter was loud and harsh. "That was a prophecy and I think she knew it, for when I kissed her for the last time—at the train station, her cheeks were wet.

"The train did not go all the way to Brasso . . . I had to ride to the village and beyond it to the castle, huddled in the shadow of the Carpathians. It was old, ancient . . . the bridge that fell to span the moat was wooden and under my horse's hooves, it shook and creaked. There was a moment when I thought it must crumble and drop me into the water below—stagnant green water, topped with slimy continents of moss and rotting leaves, better I should have drowned in it. But the bridge held firm and we were across it and my horse shied and shivered as we neared that mass of stone.

"There were plants growing in the crevices of the walls, pale plants, fungoid growths . . . and then, the dark hall with its tattered banners and its smell of decay.

"My grandfather, toad-fat, chair-bound, his mouth full of small, broken, yellow teeth, saliva wetting the corners, gleaming spittle in the deep wrinkles, looking at me out of rheumy eyes, smiling at me when I spoke of my bride, my Heidi, a lascivious smile that derided and denied her purity. And there was his fourth wife, a frightened waif, crouching beside him, suffering his fat, spotted toad hands pawing at the front of her gown. She was wearing a satin dress,

soiled and made for a woman twice her size. It drooped off her thin shoulders, shoulders bruised from the old man's pinches and when he wasn't looking, her knowing eyes were on me and her tongue circling her lips . . . I don't remember what we talked about . . . perhaps we didn't talk . . . perhaps only drank. I do remember stumbling off to a cold bed, in a cold room . . . the sheets were clammy, the blankets damp, the smell of decay, of rottenness even stronger. And in the night . . ." He shuddered.

"Don't remember any more," I begged.

"I wish I couldn't, but there is more, much more, and when I don't think about the castle, I remember the acrid taste of blood on my tongue, your blood, Barbary, hot and young, filling my pinched dry veins with spurious life, making me recall what it's like to be a man again and you, all unknowing, draining into me, being milked of your life, for me!"

I was cold with horror, but it was not the horror of knowing what he had been—that fear had passed completely and in its place was only pity for his agony and for the knowledge that was tormenting him. "Love, my dearest, it doesn't matter. It's all over and has been for a long, long time."

"Not over," he muttered. "For here we are again and why?"

Once more I tried to embrace him. "Because . . ."

He stepped away from me. "No, I can't hold you in my arms and remember. I can't live with the fear that some day I might be compelled to . . . to kill you. I . . ." His voice broke. "I can't live with that, I tell you, Lorrie."

"Why do you talk of killing me, when once you destroyed yourself so that I might live?" I cried.

"And have been forced back to . . ."

"That's what Aunt Maude said, but . . ."

"No, I remember," he said dully.

I froze and when I tried to speak, I found I could only whisper, "What do you remember?"

"Hell," he said.

"No, I . . . I don't believe it," I faltered.

"It's true. I remember emptiness, darkness, silence. And yet a knowledge of being, existing in this vast waste. Hell is not fire and brimstone. Fire is bright, glowing, warm. Hell is darkness, loneliness, cold . . . and there are memories of everything you have loved to tantalize you and increase the agony, the torture of knowing that it is lost . . . gone beyond recall."

It was impossible not to believe him, impossible not to believe that he had endured something of this Hell he had described. However, I could still ask, "Is that all you remember?"

"All, but . . ."

"But Aunt Maude told you about the damned soul, the shadow she claimed she saw, yes?" As he nodded miserably, I continued, "She lied—for her own purposes, she lied. You must come back with me."

"No."

"Listen to me," I begged. "Oh, my darling, we've been forgiven. Our misery, our loneliness is at an end. Can't you understand that? We've been allowed to come back and share our lives again. We can be happy. At last, we can be happy."

"Happy? With what I know?" he groaned. "When I left here, I wanted to drive my car off the cliffs into the sea."

"You couldn't . . . you wouldn't!" I exclaimed.

"No," he said bitterly, "because I'm a coward, because I am afraid to die back into the emptiness, but I can't live with you, Lorrie. I can't live in the world. There are monasteries . . ."

"No, you can't talk of that. Come with me, my darling, if you come with me, I am sure you'll know the truth, just as I know it."

"The . . . truth?" he repeated dubiously.

"You . . . you can find it in Barbary's room, just as I found it. I did!"

"Found it, how?"

"In my memory and you'll remember, too, as you've remembered everything else and you'll know why you came back. It was not to drag me into Hell, my dear. Do you think I could face you, do you think I could still love you and want you, if that were true? Please, you must come with me."

There was love and yearning in his glance, but there was also doubt. He said hesitantly, "Very well, but . . ."

"Come." I drew him toward the lighted hall.

As we walked up the stairs, I was both triumphant and fearful. I had persuaded him to come this far, but suppose he did not share my vision, suppose no similar revelation dispersed the darkness in his mind? I could not think about that!

We were just approaching the head of the stairs when Aunt Maude suddenly stepped into view. She glared at Dario. "What are you doing here? Why did you come back?"

I came up another step to face her. "He came back because I managed to convince him that you lied, Maude. I know you lied. I have remembered everything, everything and . . ."

Before I could finish speaking, she suddenly gave me a violent push. I grabbed for the balustrade, but though I managed to save myself from falling, my body had hurtled back against Dario, who was only inches behind me. To my utter horror, I saw him over-balance and plunge backward down some eight steps to lie very still on the first landing.

Aunt Maude's shriek was loud in my ears and my throat was torn with my own, as I ran down to kneel beside him and touching the back of his head, felt moisture on my hand.

"Dario!" I wailed.

Hysterical laughter resounded through the hall. Aunt Maude screamed, "He's dead, he's dead, Jonathan is dead." Triumphantly, she added, "You've lost him, Barbary!"

Lights went on. My parents hurried out of their room and from the third floor, Jenkins and Phoebe, his wife, descended. I was vaguely aware that it was they who drew Maude away.

"What happened, Lorrie?" my father demanded.

"Dario . . . he fell, I . . . I think he's dead," I sobbed.

"No! Oh, no!" my mother exclaimed.

My father hurried down to kneel beside me. Putting his head against Dario's heart, he said, "No, not dead, my dear. He's merely unconscious."

"How did he fall?" my mother demanded. "And what were you doing up at such an hour?"

Before I could explain, Dario groaned and opening his eyes, looked at me blearily and then with concern. "Are you hurt?"

"Hurt?" I repeated blankly.

"The tree . . . we hit the tree, didn't we? I tried to avoid it . . ."

Looking into eyes that held nothing but concern for me, I realized that in striking his head he must have lost his memory. I said carefully, "No, I'm not hurt, but you've been pretty well out of it. Do you remember coming into the house?"

"No," he frowned.

"Well, you did . . . and you even had dinner. We thought you were all right—but you fell on the stairs. You don't recall that?"

"No, I don't recall a damned thing," he complained. "God, that's awful."

"No, it isn't. There's really nothing to recall," I lied happily.

* * *

The events I have described took place over a quarter of a century ago, but as far as Dario and I are concerned, it might have been that number of minutes since. We are just as happy, just as ecstatically in love as we were when we first met, for thanks to the concussion he suffered when he fell, he still does not remember anything that occurred after he nearly hit the tree at the approach to Clinton House.

It is the only bad effect he suffered from that fall; at least he believes it to be a bad effect and I have never disagreed. However, each night I thank God that his existence as Jonathan Weir has been totally blotted from his memory—for even given the real truth of the matter, I don't think he could have lived with that knowledge and not only I would have lost him, but the world would have been deprived of his music.

We have a very busy life—much of it is spent on the road. When we are not traveling, we divide our time between our New York brownstone and Clinton House. We have two children—Anthony and Coralie, named after his father and my mother. Neither of them has any talent for music. Our son is a lawyer and at twenty-five, he has already run for public office—assemblyman. He was defeated, but he garnered enough votes to convince his party that he might do considerably better the next time. Coralie, at twenty-two, is majoring in animal husbandry.

We do not question our children's lack of interest in music or their choice of careers. Dario feels that they take after his father's side of the family. Occasionally, however, I wonder who they were before they were born to us. It really doesn't matter, except that it does help our relationship for I have never tried to make either of them conform to our mode of living—nor have I complained because they prefer soul and progressive jazz to Bach and Beethoven.

As for us, we don't live from year to year but from music season to music season. Dario's career, autumn, winter, and spring, takes him all over the world and I am

quite content to follow. Much to the anger and chagrin of Mrs. Tynan, I have not realized my potential. Instead, I am the Alicia Brent of Dario Paull, whose real name anyone in the music world would recognize. In fact, due to the media, it is almost a household word, for some critics have called him "the American Paganini" and a vast public is very proud of that distinction.

Oh, I still play the piano. I could not give it up completely. I accompany Dario when he is practicing and, on occasion, when his regular accompanist has been ill or detained in a snowstorm as he was two winters back, I have played for him in recital, but mainly I attend to the business end of his career. I arrange all of his bookings and argue over fees with concert organizations. My head is full of train schedules, plane departure times and the best three hotels in any given city. In addition, I soothe his temper when he gets angry and fend off all the women who swoon over his playing, his personality, and his handsome face, conveniently forgetting that he is married. I do not mind my position in his life nor do I miss my career—for I have come to terms with the fact that I was once Barbary Clinton, and consequently I do not need to fill my days with practicing and my nights with performing. I had all that. It's Dario's turn now.

Dario, however, has never understood why I was so willing to give it up. Of course, I could never tell him my real reason but fortunately, I had an alternate excuse that proved equally convincing when Dario, who had decided to finish his studies with Martinelli, came to me with the glad news that he had persuaded Mrs. Tynan to take me back.

"I can't go back, my dearest," I told him.

"Why not?" he demanded belligerently.

I shall never forget his look of bemused happiness when I answered, "Because . . . given her particular theories

about Life and the Pianist, my love, I do not think she'd appreciate a pregnant student."

I do not think about Maude MacIvor much, at least I try not to, but whenever I do, I am half-defiant, half-frightened as I remember the note she sent me just before taking the handful of sleeping pills that ended her life. It read:

Dear Barbary:

Well, you have won again, but one day, I shall have your Jonathan, if I have to bide my time through a thousand, thousand lives. I mean this.

Sincerely,
Maude

Occasionally, when I am lying beside my sleeping husband, I slide my arms around him and hold him close and I shiver, for she was a most determined woman. But then, I relax and I smile; for the present, he is mine.



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